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## South Thames Colleges Group

### Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments/Disability and Exams

#### 1. Positional Statement

- 1.1 STCG is committed to creating a non-discriminatory and supportive environment for all students. The colleges will ensure that students who are eligible for exam access arrangements are identified and assessed in the required manner and the necessary recommendations made. Following approval from the relevant awarding body, exam access arrangements will be put in place.
- 1.2 The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the colleges not to discriminate against students with learning difficulties/disabilities in terms of either admission to courses or provision of education and support services.
- 1.3 Students are encouraged to disclose any difficulties/disabilities that may affect their learning, either pre or post admission, in order to enable the colleges to make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs and enhance their learning. This includes adjustments where appropriate to facilitate access to examinations/assessments. The information will be treated in such a way as to ensure that it meets the colleges' guidelines on confidentiality.

#### 2. Responsibilities of STCG

- 2.1 To comply with the Equality Act 2010 the colleges are committed to making 'reasonable adjustments' to learning environments and programmes to enable all students to take advantage of the learning opportunities on offer. Staff receive relevant training and attend specialist events on subjects related to disability and learning difficulties.
- 2.2 To provide learning support wherever possible, for learners who have requirements as a result of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability - for example, physical disability, visual or hearing impairment, ill-health or a specific learning disability)
- 2.3 To enable learners to be fully integrated into FE and HE programmes at all levels according to ability by providing appropriate support.

#### 3. Categories of Learner Needs

- 3.1 Reasons for a learner to require support include but are not limited to:

Medical:	Asthma, hay fever, eczema, diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, illness requiring constant medical care and possibly regular periods in hospital
Sensory:	Hearing or sight impairment, colour blindness
Congenital Conditions:	Cerebral palsy, spina bifida, scoliosis
Loss of or injury to limb(s):	Whether congenital or as a result of an accident

Learning Difficulties:	Specific such as dyslexia
Social & Emotional/Behavioural:	Hyperactivity, trauma/shock, mental health issues

3.2 Many of these are permanent conditions. In the majority of cases, learners know what their requirements are in order to cope and be successful and have received appropriate support during previous education.

#### 4. Confidentiality

4.1 Learners have the right to request that details of a disability be kept confidential and for agreed information to be passed only to those who are actively involved in providing support appropriate to the disability.

4.2 In every instance, the learner has the right to expect appropriate support and sensitivity, which obviously varies according to individual need.

4.3 Learners who require specific action in case of an emergency, and have agreed that this information may be shared, will have their individual requirements agreed and made known to appropriate staff.

#### 5. Specialist Assessment

5.1 The access arrangement assessor (AAA) and Learning Support are responsible for the assessment of students' learning support needs

5.2 Assessors must have the required level of competence and training i.e. successful completion of a post-graduate course in individual specialist assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 **or** hold a current SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate as awarded by Patoss, the Dyslexia Action or BDA and listed on the SASC website. Checks that these qualifications have been achieved are made by HR during recruitment for these positions and specified in the job description.

5.3 The AAA and Learning Support must work with teaching staff, support staff (such as Learning Mentors) and Exams staff to ensure that approved access arrangements are put in place for internal (mocks) and external exams and assessments

5.4 Working with senior management, support, teaching and Exams staff, the AAA and Learning Support team ensure a whole centre approach to access arrangements. Failure to comply with JCQ regulations, i.e. putting in place access arrangements which are not approved or permitting access arrangements that are not supported by appropriate evidence, have the potential to constitute malpractice which may impact on candidates' results.

#### 6. Access Arrangements for Examinations/Assessments

6.1 Some learners with support needs may be eligible for access arrangements in their examinations or assessments. Access arrangements are applicable for candidates with the required knowledge, understanding and skills but who are unable to demonstrate these in an assessment in its normal format due to a difficulty or disability. Access arrangements are not intended to give an unfair advantage. They should reflect the normal way of working for which there is evidence of need.

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- 6.2 Approval of access arrangements is either centre-devolved or subject to approval from the awarding bodies. In all cases approval must be obtained within set deadlines and to comply with requirements for evidence of need and normal working practices.
- 6.4 The Exams teams have responsibility during the planning of exams or assessments for checking whether candidates have approved access arrangements and for putting them in place when required. Examples of access arrangements are:
- Extra time for written, online or oral examinations
  - A reader, scribe, prompter or practical assistant
  - Use of a word processor
  - Rest breaks (e.g. if a learner has an arthritic condition)
  - Enlarged or modified examination papers
  - Use of a communicator or sign language interpreter
  - Provision of separate or small rooms for candidates who satisfy the criteria. Separate rooms are provided only in extreme cases and generally only when one candidate might disturb others

## **7. Learner Needs' Support Process**

- 7.1 Students 'self-declare' SEND or other needs on application and during enrolment. The AAA/Learning Support team monitor declarations and contact students for assessment. Exams check past year against current year enrolments and that approved access arrangements are still valid.
- 7.2 Teaching and learning support staff identify, observe and refer students for assessment. They also provide evidence of 'normal way of working' as required.
- 7.3 The AAA/Learning Support team carry out testing as appropriate, collect evidence of need, determine the level of support required and access arrangements if appropriate and complete a report (usually the JCQ Form 8).
- 7.4 Exams apply for access arrangement approval by published deadlines and keep approval forms, Form 8s and signed data protection notices on file (inspection ready). Exams enter details on EBS. Applications for bi-lingual dictionaries are processed by Exams.
- 7.5 Exams apply access arrangements as appropriate. Exams book scribes, readers, prompters (provided by learning support staff) as needed and any special exam accommodation (e.g. for wheelchair users). Learning support staff receive training at least once a year to carry out this support within the regulations.