



## UCFB|GIS\*

# Appendix A: Policy and Procedure for Applicants with Declared Disabilities

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Version Number:	1.1
Approval Date:	08 September 2023
Approved By:	Academic Board
Date of Commencement:	11 September 2023
Date of Last Review:	
Date for Next Review:	01 September 2024

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## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1. To set out principles and procedures for the management of applications from potential students who have declared a disability, to ensure that such information is used to the benefit of the applicant.

## **2. Principles**

- 2.1. UCFB|GIS is committed to providing inclusive education which meets the specific needs of individual students. UCFB|GIS welcomes applications from people with disabilities, health conditions and specific learning difficulties, and aims to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged due to a disability or impairment.
- 2.2. This policy and procedure forms part of the wider UCFB|GIS Admissions Policy, and refers to applicants applying to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and to visiting students.
- 2.3. The policy sets out procedures for admissions staff to ensure that applications received from applicants with declared disabilities are treated fairly. The procedures seek to ensure that applicants are considered on the basis of their aptitude, skills and ability in relation to their proposed programme of study.
- 2.4. Information regarding an applicant's disability is not used in the academic decision making process. It is used constructively to ensure that we can make necessary adjustments in order that a programme of study is accessible to the applicant.
- 2.5. UCFB|GIS strongly encourages applicants to provide information about any disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty that they have, in their application, or as soon as possible after the application is submitted.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.2. The Equality Act defines disability as: "A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities", where "substantial" means more than minor or trivial and "impairment" includes long term, fluctuating or progressive medical conditions.
- 3.3. "Discrimination arising from disability" would occur if a disabled student were to be treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability. Discrimination is only justifiable if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim – e.g. maintaining academic/other standards. NB: lack of intent to discriminate is not a defence. Discrimination arising solely from disability is illegal, even if it is unintentional.
- 3.4. Reasonable adjustments must be made where disabled people experience a "substantial disadvantage". Adjustments should be anticipatory, and should relate to three areas:
  - Provision, criteria or practice
  - Physical features
  - Auxiliary aids

- 3.5. The Equality Act also allows for “positive action”. A HEI can, therefore, advertise that applications are welcomed from all groups and can target groups that are under-represented on a particular course. In addition, it is possible to advertise courses as open to disabled people only, since it is not unlawful to treat disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people.

## **4. Procedure**

### **4.1. Applicants with a declared disability**

- 4.1.1. All applicants to UCFB|GIS are encouraged to declare any disability that they may have in the relevant section of their UCAS or Postgraduate application form. The lists of disability codes currently used by UCAS Admissions System are provided below in Figure 1.
- 4.1.2. In addition, applicants are encouraged to provide information relating to their disability, and in particular whether additional facilities or support are likely to be required during the course of their studies. This could be included in the application, or through direct contact with UCFB|GIS.
- 4.1.3. Visiting students are asked to indicate whether or not they have a disability, but are not asked for details of the disability in the application form. Those who have indicated that they have a disability are contacted directly by a specialist advisor from the Student Support team. Non-UK applicants (those who have not lived in the UK for a period of 3 years or more) are encouraged to provide translated copies of their evidence . Where a translated copy is not provided, applicants may be asked to attend a UK assessment (where practicable) at a cost to themselves.
- 4.1.4. Applicants who have not provided any information on disability, and who have not ticked any box, will be deemed not to have a declared disability, although that status would be changed should the applicant provide information regarding a disability later in the admissions process.

### **4.2. Selection Procedures**

- 4.2.1. The selection procedure for applications from students with a declared disability is identical to the process for all other applications.
- 4.2.2. Applications are assessed against agreed selection criteria for each undergraduate degree programme or postgraduate programme. Applications that meet the minimum entry requirements progress to a selection process in which each application received by the specified deadline is given full and equal consideration.
- 4.2.3. Consideration of a declared disability and any required adjustments will take place separately, after the academic selection decision has been made. Where no adjustments are required, or the adjustments are straightforward, an offer will be made as in the standard admissions process. If discussions are required with the applicant regarding the necessary adjustments, the offer will remain on hold until those discussions are completed. Further details of this process are given

below.

- 4.2.4. All information provided by an applicant regarding their disability will be treated as confidential. It will be shared only for the purposes of making reasonable adjustments.

### 4.3. Reasonable Adjustments

- 4.3.1. Admissions staff are not expected to assess what adjustments will need to be made in order for an applicant with a declared disability to successfully access their studies at the UCFB|GIS. However, it may sometimes be necessary for the Admissions Team to request additional information from an applicant about their disability, and to discuss this information with a specialist advisor, and, in some cases, the Programme Leader, after the selection process has been completed but before an offer is issued.
- 4.3.2. In many cases, applicants will have provided information about any specific support they will require in order to study at UCFB|GIS within their application. Admissions staff may be aware that the support requested is readily available (for example, exam support for a student with dyslexia, large print handouts for a visually impaired student, accessible seminar rooms for a person with mobility difficulties etc.) in which case the offer can be made as per the standard admissions process. If the Admissions Team is uncertain as to whether the required support is available, they may contact the Student Support team for advice. In most cases, this will lead to the offer being made as usual.
- 4.3.3. In some cases, applicants will not have provided information about any specific support they will require when studying at UCFB|GIS. In such situations, if the applicant has indicated that they have a specific learning difficulty, the Admissions Team can make the assumption that any support needs can be met and make the offer as standard.
- 4.3.4. If the applicant has indicated any disability other than a specific learning difficulty, a specialist advisor will contact the applicant and ask for more information about any adjustments required, prior to an offer being made. When additional information is received, it will be recorded on the applicant's record. At this point, the Admissions Team should follow the process as set out in [4.3.2](#) above.
- 4.3.5. If an applicant fails to respond to the request to provide additional information within 10 working days, this will be recorded in the notes field of the applicant record and other avenues of contact pursued. The Admissions Team, Programme Leader and lead specialist advisor will then make a decision regarding the applicant's offer based on the limited information available.
- 4.3.6. Following discussion with the Student Support team and Programme Leader, if it appears that there may be difficulties in making the adjustments required to enable the applicant to access the programme, the Student Support team will facilitate further discussions with the applicant to try to resolve the issue. This may include a meeting with the

applicant and the Programme Leader where that is possible. The application will be on hold during this process. There will be no requirement for the Admissions Team to contact the applicant since the applicant will be part of the discussion. If the decision is taken that the offer can be made, the Admissions Team will be informed and will be able to make the offer.

- 4.3.7. Very occasionally, following the discussions set out in [4.3.6](#), 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 professional competencies of the course, or because of health and safety risks related to equipment which the applicant would be required to use on the course. In these situations, academic colleagues and the Student Support team would work with the student to consider if a place on an appropriate alternative programme could be offered.
- 4.3.8. If no agreement can be reached regarding an alternative programme, and UCFB|GIS decides that it cannot offer a place to the student, the applicant should be informed of this decision in writing by a senior member of staff (Dean or their nominated representative), and provided with reasons as to why no reasonable adjustments were possible. The applicant should be assisted in the process of securing an appropriate alternative programme at another institution.
- 4.3.9. In the event that UCFB|GIS finds that it is unable to meet an applicant's support needs after the offer has been issued (e.g. when an applicant discloses a disability after an offer has been made), 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. Whenever possible, the applicant should be involved in discussions to find a place on an appropriate alternative programme at UCFB|GIS and, if this is not possible, the applicant should be assisted in the process of securing an appropriate alternative programme at another institution.
- 4.3.10. If a student has started a programme but expresses an interest in transferring, the same process above will need to be followed to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made for the student on the new programme. A discussion with the student, Programme Leader and Student Support team will take place to assess the suitability of the new course, and any reasonable adjustments that need to be made.

#### 4.4. Interviews / Auditions

- 4.4.1. If the selection procedure involves an interview or audition, all applicants should be asked if they require any adjustments to be put in place for the interview or audition, and the Admissions Team should make adequate arrangements to ensure that an applicant with additional needs is not disadvantaged. The Learning Support Lead can provide advice if required.

#### 4.5. Reports and Communications

- 4.5.1. All communications with offer holders should be provided in an alternative format if requested.
- 4.5.2. Student Recruitment and Admissions maintain records identifying undergraduate and postgraduate offer holders who have declared a disability. The relevant reports can be sent to in-house Facilities and Accommodation advisors, and to UCFB|GIS undergraduate and postgraduate advisors within the Student Support team. Should any other service require copies of these reports, they should contact Student Recruitment and Admissions to make a request.
- 4.5.3. During the admissions cycle, Student Support Advisors will send a standard email to all offer holders who have declared a disability, sign-posting them to the support services available.
- 4.5.4. The Student Support Advisors will also proactively contact applicants for further information where necessary, and to advise Facilities and Accommodation services in order to plan ahead. Student Support Advisors may act as the main point of contact between the new students and these services.
- 4.5.5. The Student Support team will update the institution's student records system providing details of applicants with a declared disability and their needs.
- 4.5.6. All invitations to any other post-application events should include information about the student disability services to encourage both applicants who have declared a disability, and those who have not, to take the opportunity to speak to staff if they feel it may be beneficial to them.
- 4.5.7. No communications must be sent to undergraduate students during the UCAS embargo period.

#### 4.6. Reports and Communications

- 4.6.1. Where the decision has been taken not to offer a place to an applicant, the applicant may request feedback and subsequently make an appeal or a complaint, using the process set out in the UCFB|GIS Complaint Policy.

## **Figure 1**

### **UCAS Disability Codes**

These are the disability codes for UCAS:

- A - No disability;
- B - You have a social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder;
- C - You are blind or have a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses;
- D - You are deaf or have a serious hearing impairment;
- E - You have a long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy;
- F - You have a mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder;
- G - You have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D;
- H - You have physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches;
- I - You have a disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above;
- J - You have two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions.