

Equal Opportunities for Students Policy Statement

The College is committed to a policy of equal opportunities in accordance with its Charter. It is the College's aim that potential and actual students are treated fairly on the basis of merit regardless of age, disability, family responsibilities, gender, HIV status, marital status, mental health problems, nationality, race, religious or political views or affiliations, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or transexualism. The College follows a code of practice to ensure that this policy is fully effective:

Code of Practice

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1. Student Admissions

1.1 Recruitment literature will include a statement of the College's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students. All recruitment literature will use non-discriminatory language and will encourage applications from groups under-represented in higher education. Prospective students will be given realistic guidance on the costs they can expect to face and of financial support arrangements available to them. In particular, students who would expect to undertake study abroad or compulsory vacation courses will be given full details in advance.

1.2 The College's aim is to select those students most likely to benefit intellectually from its courses; aptitude for a particular course of study is the primary criterion for selection.

1.3 A student's academic qualifications provide evidence in the assessment of aptitude but other evidence relating to the student's academic record is also relevant. Reliance on academic qualifications for the assessment of aptitude to the exclusion of other factors may be discriminatory.

1.4 In assessing academic aptitude, the following particular considerations apply:

(a) The College recognises many qualifications as meeting the general entry requirement but the requirements of particular courses may indicate that certain levels of performance in specific subjects are normally a prerequisite for admission.

(b) As a matter of principle the College will not discriminate against applicants on any of the

following grounds:

- Disability
- family responsibilities
- gender
- HIV status
- marital status
- mental health problems
- nationality
- race
- religious or political views or affiliations
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic background
- transexualism

The College defines 18 years as the minimum age for admission.

There is no upper age limit for admission.

(c) The level of non-academic support, which an applicant will require, is specifically excluded from consideration.

1.5 Previous and predicted pre-entry examination results will be regarded as only one type of evidence. In assessing a student's potential, weight will always be given to any identifiable factors which may have led the student to 'under perform', for example:

- attendance at poorly equipped or poorly staffed schools/colleges
- poor facilities, or none, for private study at home
- early family responsibilities
- a background in which the candidate's interest in higher education has not been encouraged
- a disability or prolonged illness which has affected educational development
- financial hardship

1.6 Explicit selection criteria will be established in order to eliminate subjectivity and to provide a framework for fair selection. Academic and other staff dealing with admissions will be aware of and conform to the College's Equal Opportunities Policies relating to students.

1.7 The procedures followed during Confirmation and Clearing will be reviewed and if necessary revised, to minimise the risk of inadvertent discrimination, particularly in respect of filling vacancies. Students admitted through Clearing will be monitored separately to see if the arrangements might give rise to inequality of opportunity.

1.8 The College will put in place arrangements to allow the monitoring of applications and admissions to the College for undergraduate or postgraduate studies, by ethnic origin, gender, age and disability. The monitoring statistics will be considered by the Equal Opportunities Advisory Committee and circulated to Admissions Tutors on an annual basis. If there is any indication that members of one group have received less favourable treatment than members of another group the situation will be investigated and appropriate action taken. The College will monitor those students who temporarily or permanently withdraw from their degree schemes to see if there are implications for a policy of responsible recruitment.

1.9 The College recognises the need to strike a balance between the work of selectors who exercise academic judgement on the merits of applicants for places or scholarships and the need to ensure that the College's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students is fully met. If a candidate complains that his or her application has not been treated in accordance with the policy then the complaint will be referred to the Head of Students for investigation. An annual report on complaints received will be considered by the Equal Opportunities Advisory Committee.

2. Assessment

2.1 The College's objective is to provide a fair method of assessment for equality of opportunity to all of its students.

2.2 Special arrangements will be made available to students with known disabilities, to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the disability without affecting the validity of examinations and assessments.

2.3 When an External Examiner is appointed to examine a taught course or a research degree the College will draw his or her attention to the College's Policy on Equal Opportunities for Students. The College expects all external examiners to act in accordance with this policy.

3. Curriculum

3.1 The College recognises the importance of the development of the individual through the educational process and the role of the curriculum in ensuring that this development is fulfilled.

3.2 The College is therefore committed to the promotion of equal opportunity with respect to course content, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment methods and the structure and timetabling of courses of study. Further, it will aim to ensure that documents such as course submissions, teaching materials and examination papers reflect the principles of equal opportunities.

3.3 The College will aim to provide a programme of courses which are of relevance and interest to persons of both sexes and from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds and which are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities, as far as resources permit.

3.4 The College will encourage perspectives which reflect the cultural diversity of our society and which are neither gender dominated nor ethnocentric.

3.5 The College will encourage and appraise from an equal opportunities point of view through the process of validation and monitoring the use of a range of teaching approaches as well as assessment

methods and will be sensitive to the special needs of under-represented groups in teaching and learning situations.

4. Teaching

4.1 All staff and students of the College will use language, which is non-discriminatory and is not gratuitously chosen in order to cause offence to particular groups, in the course of teaching and learning. However, it is a fundamental principle of academic freedom that reasoned argument may be employed to test and challenge views, opinions and assertions of all kinds, and in no circumstances may this clause be used to discourage or prevent the exercise of that freedom.

4.2 The College will take account of the needs of individual students and, wherever reasonably practicable within existing constraints, consideration will be given to issues such as caring for dependants, when lectures and examinations are timetabled.

4.3 Students will be allowed to change Personal Tutors without difficulty, and the procedure will be widely publicised.

5. Services and Facilities

5.1 The College is committed to the principle of equal access by all of its students in groups or as individuals to the services it provides and the facilities it offers.

5.2 The College offers residential accommodation and/or assists full-time registered students to secure accommodation in the area. Owners of properties, which are leased by the College or made available for letting via the Accommodation Office, will be made aware of the College's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students.

The College will not accept properties from owners who seek to impose discriminatory conditions contrary to equal opportunities legislation.

5.3 The College's catering services aim to take account, as far as is practicable, of the cultural, religious and dietary needs and wishes of all staff and students in the provision of meals and beverages, without allowing views on dietary matters to inhibit the freedom of choice of those who do not subscribe to them.

5.4 The work of the Careers Advisory Service will be monitored and subject to scrutiny in respect of equal opportunities.

5.5 Sports facilities will be kept under regular review to ensure that the provision does not disadvantage any particular groups of students, including people with disabilities.

6. Health and Safety

6.1 The College aims to provide its staff and students with a healthy and safe environment in which to work and live. Detailed policies and codes of practice, and appropriate handbooks, are available and it is the duty of all students to familiarise themselves with those and comply with the relevant requirements. The enforcement of reasonable health and safety requirements does not constitute discrimination.

6.2 The College will make every effort to ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, all parts of the College are accessible and safe. The needs of people with disabilities will be given particular consideration.

6.3 The College will work as closely as possible with the Students' Union to ensure the security of the students both on campus and when travelling between the College and off-campus facilities.

6.4 The College will ensure that equal opportunities principles are taken into account in its policy on transport and parking, and will take account of the special safety needs of women and students from minority groups and the parking needs of mature students and students with disabilities.

7. Disciplinary Procedures

The College's Disciplinary Procedures will be kept under review to ensure that they are consistent with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy for Students.

8. Training

8.1 All College staff normally having contact with students will receive a copy of this Policy and Code of Practice supplemented by basic training appropriate to their role in the College.

8.2 Specific advice and training will be given to Academic staff in relation to recruitment and selection, assessment, tutoring and student disciplinary procedures.

9. Harassment and Bullying

9.1 The College has a Policy Statement on Harassment and wishes to encourage a culture where harassment and bullying are unable to thrive. Incidents of harassment and bullying are regarded extremely seriously and may be grounds for disciplinary action including dismissal or expulsion.

9.2 The College has established an Anti-Harassment Network to assist with complaints of harassment and bullying from staff or students.