Reference number: P75

Higher Education Disability Support for Students Policy

Including support for learners with disabilities learning difficulties and long-term health conditions

Policy Review				
Author/Owner Sian Pering	Position Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning	Approved by SMT Signed:	Approval date: 22.05.25	Review date: Annual

Document Control – Revision History (Policies only)

Author/Owner	Summary of Changes	Date	Date last reviewed by SED	Version	Recommend to SED Y/N
Sian Deasy	New Policy			V1	
Sian Deasy	Amendment of line spacing, justification and addition of contents page in line with Accessibility good practice. More detail added on support for apprentices, the process of completing a student support plan, and processes for safeguarding checks for non-medical helpers and using recording devices.	16.06.23			N
Sian Deasy	Small amendments to clarify wording, as suggested by student reviewer. Small amendments to make applicability to 'Professional' HE (not recognised for funding purposes) clear.	23.05.24	-	-	-
Sian Pering	Grammatical changes for consistency in referring to 'learners' and 'the College / the University Centre'. Increased signposting to internal processes for apprentices (which have changed since this policy was last reviewed), and adapted approach to requesting Exam Access Arrangements in response to changes in SEND team protocols.			V1.1	

Initial Equality Impact Screening	
Who has been consulted on this policy & procedure?	Feedback from students in receipt of DSA at creation, as well as input from colleagues at the Open University as part of the Institutional Approval process in 2023. Scrutiny from Student Voice Officer as part of 2024 update process.

What evidence has been used for this impact screening (e.g. related policies, publications)?

Reference to other HE policies and procedures, including Student Protection Plan. Consultation with colleagues working in other HE College environments. Office of the Independent Adjudicator – Best Practice Framework – Supporting Disabled Students. Gov.uk information on Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Declaration (please tick one statement and indicate any negative impacts)

☒   We are satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this policy/procedure and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not   required. There are no specific negative impacts on any of the Protected Characteristics groups, provided that all other associated   procedures are followed.

☐   We recommend that an Equality Impact Assessment is required by the Equality and Diversity group, as possible negative impacts have been identified for one or more of the Protected Characteristics groups as follows:

        ☐   Age
        ☐   Disability
        ☐   Gender Reassignment
        ☐   Race
        ☐   Religion or belief
        ☐   Sex
        ☐   Sexual orientation
        ☐   Marriage & civil partnership
        ☐   Pregnancy & maternity

Completed by Author	Sian Pering	**Position**	Head of HE & Adult Learning	**Date: 16.06.24**
☐ **Reviewed by Equality & Diversity Group**				**Date:**
☐ **We confirm that any recommended amendments have been made**				
Amended by Author		**Position**		**Date**

Summary of Comments/Recommendations from Equality & Diversity Group Review:

Contents

1.   PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

1.1.   Yeovil College University Centre (YCUC) is committed to ensuring every learner with potential is able to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education. The College will work to ensure that all learners are supported to engage with their studies effectively, and to ensure that learners with disabilities, learning difficulties, and long-term health conditions receive the support and reasonable adjustments they require to enjoy a high-quality experience of higher education at YCUC.

1.2.   This policy outlines support available for individuals with disabilities, learning difficulties, and long-term health conditions who are considering applying to, in the process of applying to, or studying with YCUC.

2.   SCOPE

2.1.   This policy applies to all prospective and registered learners of higher education programmes at Yeovil College University Centre. This includes learners studying qualifications at Level 4 or above that may have historically been categorised as both 'Professional HE' and 'prescribed' or 'recognised for funding purposes' HE qualifications. However, the way that learning support is coordinated and funded nationally means that the specific routes to access learning support will vary depending on whether a learner is studying a course that is 'recognised for funding purposes' by the Office for Students, and / or whether a learner is an Apprentice. This landscape is not always straightforward to navigate, and all current and prospective learners are encouraged to discuss potential support needs with University Centre staff at the earliest opportunity to ensure they are engaging with the correct processes and routes to access support.

2.2.   Learners studying on 'franchised' or 'flying faculty' programmes should be aware that some support requests may fall under the remit of the awarding university, rather than the College (e.g. requests for exam access arrangements). In these cases, the College can put learners in touch with the relevant department(s) at the awarding university, but the College does not have control over the decisions that they take.

2.3.   At university level, a lot of the support for learners with disabilities, learning difficulties and long-term health conditions is provided through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), rather than being provided directly by a university or college. Further

information on DSA is available in the College's DSA Guide, available in both written and video format on the 'Student Support'[1] page of the website, and all learners who are eligible are encouraged to make the most of accessing this support. It can take up to 20 weeks for the DSA process to be completed, so early completion is vital to ensure support is in place by the start of term. Current or prospective learners who have any queries about the DSA process, or require any support, may contact the YCUC team via 01935845454 or university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk.

2.4. Whilst many of the reasonable adjustments in this policy are available to learners studying a YCUC course as part of a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, or studying a 'Professional HE' programme that is not recognised by the Office for Students for funding purposes, Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is not, owing to the way that learning support is funded and regulated nationally for these programmes. For more information on alternative support available for Higher or Degree Apprentices or learners on 'Professional HE' programmes who cannot access DSA, please refer to the Learner Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy, or contact your Lecturer (if already on programme) or the College's Employer Engagement team or the University Centre team (if a prospective learner).

2.5. The provision of diagnostic assessments is not within the scope of this policy. However, if a learner requires support in accessing a diagnostic assessment, the University Centre team can provide signposting to relevant information on how a diagnosis can be obtained, and potential financial support the College can provide to support with this process.

3.   RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

3.1. All potential learners should be mindful of the benefits of seeking support early. The earlier that the College are aware of any support or reasonable adjustment requirements, the greater the likelihood that robust and appropriate support can be put in place by the time a learner starts their course.

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[1] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/university-centre/yeovil-college-university-centre-student-support/

3.2. In line with the HE Terms and Conditions, published in the 'Policies and Reports' section of the college website[2], at university-level, responsibility sits with the learner to ensure that the College are aware of any support needs in a timely fashion.

3.3. The nominated Disability Advisor for YCUC learners is the College's Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning – Sian Pering. Both current learners and those considering coming to study with the University Centre can contact Sian via Sian.Pering@yeovil.ac.uk.

4. SUPPORT AND REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PROSPECTIVE LEARNERS WHILST DECIDING WHAT TO STUDY

4.1. On the Yeovil College website and at open events, prospective learners can access information about the course, types of assessment, placements (where appropriate), trips and field work. If prospective learners have any queries about additional support that might be needed to study the course, or support available, they are very welcome to contact the University Centre via university.centre@yeovi.ac.uk or 01935 845454 to discuss this, or to speak directly to a member of staff if they are visiting an open event.

4.2. At interview, prospective learners have the chance to go through this information in person with an academic member of staff who teaches on the programme they are applying for. At interview, prospective learners are very welcome to discuss specific support they might need as a result of a disability, learning difficulty, or long-term health condition.

4.3. If, during the decision and application period, a prospective learner requires further information about additional support that might be needed to study a particular course, or would like the opportunity to discuss the course with an academic member of staff prior to applying, they are welcome to contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk.

4.4. In line with the Admissions Policy, if a learner requires reasonable adjustments at any point to engage with the application, interview, or admissions process they can request these. For YCUC learners, please contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk to request these.

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[2] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/

5.   CAMPUS TOURS

5.1.   Yeovil College runs regular Open Events which are open to prospective learners at all levels and include the opportunity to visit the college campus. To register, visit the 'Events'[3] page of the Yeovil College website.

5.2.   If a prospective learner would like a bespoke tour, or have any specific needs, they should please contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk or 01935845454 to outline their request. A non-exhaustive list of examples where people may require a bespoke tour include:

5.2.1.   A visually impaired learner who would like more time on site to familiarise themself with the social and teaching spaces they will be using most often.

5.2.2.   A learner with anxiety who would like some time to get used to the classrooms they will be taught in and possibly to select the seat / workstation they would like prior to the start of term.

6.   GETTING DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWNACE (DSA) SUPPORT IN PLACE

6.1.   All prospective learners are informed about the DSA process at interview. Full information about DSA can be found in the College's DSA Guide, available in both written and video format on the 'Student Support'[4] page of the website, and prospective learners are encouraged to familiarise themselves with that information.

6.2.   The College would encourage all current and prospective learners who are in receipt of DSA to discuss the support their DSA has recommended with the College. This will also allow the College to have a full picture of the support a learner can access, and to take reasonable steps to put in place any necessary reasonable adjustments.

6.3.   It is essential that current and prospective learners keep the College informed if they intend to put in place DSA-recommended support that will be accessed whilst at college. This will allow the College to ensure that teaching staff are aware of how to support learners best, and that the College are complying with relevant legislation. Support accessed at college which learners must inform the College about includes, but is not limited to, the examples below:

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[3] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/events/
[4] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/university-centre/yeovil-college-university-centre-student-support/

6.3.1. A learner must inform the College if they have been recommended a non-medical helper who would be supporting them on-site at college (for example, a note-taker who would be in lessons, or a study skills tutor who would want to meet on-site rather than virtually or at home). As a college site, with children and vulnerable adults, there is a process that the College must follow to complete relevant safeguarding, enhanced DBS, and safer recruitment checks before non-medical helpers can begin regularly visiting the site. This process is not about passing judgement upon whether or not a leaner is entitled to support – it is in place to ensure that non-medical helpers are safe to be on-site and aware of their responsibilities whilst working at the College in order to comply with relevant Safeguarding legislation and responsibilities. More information on the safer recruitment processes can be found in the Recruitment Policy and Procedure in the 'Policies and Reports' section of the college website[5].

6.3.2. A learner must inform the College if they have been recommended some sort of recording device to support with their learning, as there is a process to be completed before these devices can be used in lessons. This process involves the learner signing a contract agreeing to only use the recording device in line with the provisions of their DSA to support their learning, and not misusing the technology to record outside of taught sessions or share or publish recordings that have been made. This process also involves identifying how a learner can navigate using their recording device outside of 'typical' learning environments (such as on a trip, or with a guest lecturer), and how a learner can raise if they feel they have been prohibited from using their recording device unfairly. This is to ensure that both learners and staff can be confident that recordings are being used in an appropriate way to support with learning, and not in a way that breaches GDPR or Copyright legislation.

7. PREPARING FOR THE START OF TERM

7.1. The College's aim is that on the first day of study all learners will arrive confident that any potential barriers to their learning have been identified and understood, and that appropriate steps have been taken in response. However, this will only be possible if

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[5] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/

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current and prospective learners have made the University Centre aware of any relevant disability, learning difficulty or long-term health condition in good time, and applied for DSA where appropriate.

7.2. If an applicant declares a disability, learning difficulty or long-term health condition as part of their application then they will be offered the opportunity to have a meeting with a member of staff (either a member of the YCUC team, or else an Advanced SEND Practitioner if the learner is an Apprentice). This meeting will typically be scheduled either in advance of the start of the course, or soon after they have begun their programme of study. It may be that a specialist member of staff from the Learning Support Team or the subject teaching team for also attends, if this is appropriate or required. This meeting would cover topics such as:

7.2.1. Whether the learner has applied for DSA, and if so, what support they are able to access, as well as whether the learner requires any support with the DSA application process and how the College could help with that.

7.2.2. Support that the College can, and cannot, offer to ensure the learner can fully access their learning.
- In most cases, this will be guided by the recommendations for provider support made in a learner's DSA report, which may include measures such as, but not limited to, provision of lecture slides in advance, access to 1:1 support with LRC staff, permission to use assistive technology in class, or a learner being assigned a particular seat in class (e.g. at the front or near an exit) to best meet their needs.
- If a learner does not have DSA but has a diagnostic report or medical documentation outlining recommendations for reasonable adjustments these will be considered in much the same way as a DSA report.
- If a learner does not have DSA or a formal diagnostic assessment but does have knowledge of reasonable adjustments they believe would support them in their learning, perhaps based on adjustments they have previously accessed at school or in the workplace, these can also be discussed. There may be some adjustments, such as being able to sit at the front of a classroom so as to most easily see the board, or access to coloured overlays to support with reading hard-copy text, which can be readily implemented to support a learner regardless of whether or not they have a DSA or diagnostic report. Whilst the College will make anticipatory

reasonable adjustments wherever possible and reasonable, learners should be aware that there are some provisions, for example access to additional time for assessments, which cannot usually be accessed without a DSA or other appropriate professional diagnostic assessment owing to the regulations of awarding organisations. If a learner requires a diagnostic assessment, the College will support the learner in this process via signposting to routes to obtaining a formal diagnosis, as well as financial support that the College offers to support learners with this process.

- Whilst the College will endeavour to support learners, situations where support cannot be offered might include where a learner wishes the College to provide support that is already provided and funded through the learner's DSA, where a learner's request goes beyond the scope of the course as validated and advertised (for example a learner requesting online access to a course that is not offered as a distance learning provision), or where the provision of requested support would not be reasonable, for example, if it would risk the health and safety of others.

7.2.3. Whether it would be helpful to inform teaching and support staff of the learner's needs and how to support them best, and if so, how. In most cases, the College would recommend including relevant information in the learner's record in the central Management Information System so that relevant staff can access information on how to support them best, including those who may teach the learner in future. A learner's permission will always be obtained before uploading this information.

7.2.4. Whether it would be helpful to inform the learner's classmates of their needs and how to learn alongside them best, and if so, how.

7.2.5. Whether the learner will require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan to be put in place (only for those learners whose disability may affect their ability to safely exit a building in the event of an emergency).

7.3. If a learner declares a disability, learning difficulty or long-term health condition during their time studying with the College, then these conversations about support will be organised on an ad-hoc basis as they become appropriate.

8.   EXAM ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS [7]

8.1.   Assessment for, and approval of, Exam Access Arrangements will be in line with the College's Learner Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy[6]. A learner who believes they require Exam Access Arrangements must inform their Programme Leader at the start of the programme, or as soon as the need for Exam Access Arrangements arises if a learner becomes disabled or receives a learning difficulty or long-term health condition diagnosis during the programme. Their Programme Leader will then complete the relevant internal paperwork to request the Exam Access Arrangements are considered (the 'Normal Ways of Working' form). The Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning can support with this process if required. Learners should be aware that timescales set by Awarding Bodies may mean that it is not possible to get Exam Access Arrangements in place if they are not requested in a timely way.

8.2.   Once the Normal Ways of Working form has been completed, it will be reviewed by relevant staff. If an in-person assessment is required, this will be scheduled, and then a learner will normally find out on the day of the exam access assessment, what exam access arrangements have been approved. For learners who do not undertake an in-person assessment, a 'LS3 Form' will be sent to the learner to summarise their exam access arrangements, and the learner can sign to agree to these. If a learner has not heard back with their agreed exam access arrangements within four weeks of the Normal Ways of Working form being submitted, they should speak to their tutor, or email eaa@yeovil.ac.uk to request an update.

8.3.   If a learner has been recommended Exam Access Arrangements as part of their Needs Assessment Report when applying for DSA then these will be given due consideration by the College in advance of any examinations. However, whilst a DSA recommendation will usually be accepted as appropriate supporting evidence, the DSA recommendation on its own does not mean the Exam Access Arrangements are automatically in place, and a learner would need to discuss the Exam Access Arrangements recommended with their Programme Leader.

8.4.   The College will aim to discuss any exam arrangements with relevant learners at the start of the academic year. However, if an assessment schedule changes in-year, then

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[6] Available at https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/

any affected learners should contact their Programme Leader to discuss this as soon as possible once they become aware of any changes.

8.5.   Learners should be aware that there may be situations where a particular Exam Access Arrangement cannot be implemented, as a particular form of assessment is required to test a competence standard that is an essential part of their course (for example, but not limited to, a timed examination, an examination with unseen material, an oral presentation, a practical demonstration of a particular skill). If this is the case, then the College will explain to the learner clearly why it is not appropriate to implement an Exam Access Arrangement in this particular instance, and the competence standard that is being assessed which requires the specific form of assessment. If a learner believes they have been unfairly disadvantaged because of this decision, they should follow the process outlined in the Customer Feedback Policy and Procedure (including complaints), which is available in the 'Policies and Reports'[7] section of the website.

9.   EXTENSIONS TO COURSEWORK [8]

9.1.   In many cases, learners with appropriate support in place ought not to need routine extensions to deadlines. Difficulties can often emerge if learners are regularly submitting their work later than their peers, including not fully utilising scheduled opportunities to discuss their work with peers and tutors, and the domino effect of multiple extensions upon future learning.

9.2.   That said, there is an extensions process in place and learners can apply for extension(s) if they require extra time to complete an assignment, whether as a result of an ongoing or fluctuating disability, learning difficulty or health condition, or other reasons such as bereavement or illness. The full details of this process are laid out in the HE Assessment, Extensions, and Extenuating Circumstances Policy, which is available via the YCUC Student Help Zone on Moodle.

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[7] https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports/

[8] These sections do not apply to students studying 'franchised' or 'flying faculty' courses, including, BA (Hons) Business Management and Strategy, BSc (Hons) Social Work, and the Level 6 BEng (Hons) Engineering top-up degree with the University of Plymouth. Students on these courses must refer to the regulations of their awarding institution. The YCUC team can support a student to contact the relevant department at their awarding University so that they can access appropriate support.

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10. SUPPORT DURING STUDIES

10.1. If a learner's circumstances change during their time at college, and they feel that they may require different support to be put in place, they should inform the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning, or the Advanced SEND Practitioner they are working with (if the learner is an Apprentice).

10.2. If a learner becomes disabled or is diagnosed with a learning difficulty or long-term health condition during their time at college, they should inform the YCUC team of this so that appropriate support can be put in place.

10.3. If a learner needs to suspend their studies, or wishes to reduce the intensity of their study, they should approach the YCUC team to request this, in line with the HE Withdrawal and Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy. Every request will be given due consideration, however, it is not guaranteed that this will always be possible, as courses are regulated by the policies and procedures of awarding universities and awarding bodies. For example, some programmes are not available on a part-time basis due to university requirements, and some awarding organisations have restrictions on the number of times a learner can suspend or resume their studies.

10.4. Yeovil College wishes to provide a working and learning environment that acknowledges the richness of diversity, as well as valuing and managing each individual's equality of opportunity within the College. The College opposes all forms of discrimination or victimisation on any grounds such as age, race, disability, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment or marital status. If a learner feels that they are facing discrimination or victimisation on grounds of disability, or they have witnessed discriminatory behaviour towards another learner or member of staff, then they should inform their Programme Leader or the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning.

10.5. The College's Moodle site makes teaching and learning materials available, as well as a range of resources to support with wellbeing and wider student life. Accessibility tools are available within Moodle, and the 'Learning Support' part of the YCUC Student Help Zone explains how to enable these features.

10.6. If there are specific materials that a learner is struggling to access, they should inform their Programme Leader or the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning. If a learner is struggling to access resources, then they should inform the LRC team who may be able to provide resources in more accessible formats, for example, through their links with initiatives such as RNIB Bookshare.

11.   PLACEMENTS

11.1. If a programme has a placement component, the requirements of the placement will be discussed with each learner at interview to ensure that the placement is suitable. In some courses, a suitability declaration will need to be completed as part of the admissions process.

11.2. Before the placement component of a course is begun, learners will have the opportunity to discuss with relevant staff how much information about their disability, learning difficulty or long-term health condition should be shared with the placement provider in order to ensure a good quality learning experience.

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS

Office of the Independent Adjudicator – Best Practice Framework – Supporting Disabled Students[9]

Gov.uk information on Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)[10]

Learner Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

HE Student Terms and Conditions

Admissions Policy

HE Withdrawal and Temporary Suspension of Studies Policy

Equality Act (2010)

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[9] https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/supporting-disabled-students/
[10] https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa

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12. Appendix A – Staff Guidance

1. All HE Programme Leaders should discuss the DSA process with learners applying for an OfS-fundable HE programme at interview (as per the pro-forma) and provide the guidance documents where appropriate.

2. All staff should be alert to situations where learners may be disclosing a disability. If a learner shares this information, you should ascertain whether they have ever made anyone at the College aware of this before, and if not, you should ask them to inform the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning, or offer to do so on their behalf. Once a learner has told any member of staff they are disabled then the College are not able to claim they did not know unless the learner told you in complete confidence.

3. If the learner tells you in complete confidence, then you should make them aware that this will limit the support they can access. If they are insistent that this information be kept confidential then that is their prerogative (provided it does not conflict with any professional obligation to safeguard and protect learners from harm).

4. If learners have a non-medical helper (LSP / Interpreter / Note-taker / Other support person) on-site they should have undergone the Associate Staff process. This means they will have a Yeovil College ID Badge and orange 'Associate Staff' lanyard to wear on site. On a rare occasion where a substitute or cover support person comes on-site, they should sign in as a visitor and wear their visitor ID badge at all times whilst on-site. If you believe that a learner has a non-medical helper on-site who is not yet an Associate Staff member you should make the learner and helper aware of these processes. You should also alert the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning to any instances where this has happened as they may represent a Safeguarding breach.

5. If a learner is using a recording device, this needs to have been authorised by the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning through the Student Recording Device Process. If you believe that a learner is using a non-authorised recording device you should make the learner aware of these processes. You should also alert the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning, as this may be a breach of GDPR compliance.

6. If you are unsure about how to appropriately support a YCUC learner with a disability, learning difficulty or long-term health condition, including concerns around how to

ensure assessment is fully accessible, or whether a certain element of an assessment is a 'Competence Standard' and therefore reasonable adjustments should not be made, you should contact the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning in the first instance. Where required, specialist advice will be sought from sources including, but not limited to, the College's Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator, external agencies with expertise in DSA support, or solicitors.

7. The learning environment should be as inclusive as possible, and teaching, learning and assessment should be designed in such a way that the need for individual interventions are the exception, not the rule.

8. If a learner with a disability discloses that they feel they are being discriminated against on the grounds of their disability, then this should be dealt with in line with the appropriate procedure – including the Disciplinary Policy (Learner Conduct) if the discrimination is coming from fellow learners.