

Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy

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Introduction

International College of Contemporary Sciences ICCS is committed to providing an inclusive learning and assessment environment in which all students are treated with dignity, fairness and respect. The college recognises that some students experience disability, long term health conditions, specific learning difficulties or other circumstances that may create disadvantage in relation to learning, teaching or assessment. Reasonable adjustments and, where appropriate, special consideration are key mechanisms through which ICCS seeks to remove or reduce barriers while maintaining the integrity of its programmes and awards.

This policy explains how ICCS approaches reasonable adjustment and special consideration, the principles that underpin decision making and the responsibilities of students and staff in implementing the arrangements. It forms part of the ICCS quality assurance framework and should be read alongside policies on assessment, equality, diversity and inclusion, appeals and complaints. The overarching aim is to ensure that students who are eligible for support are enabled to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills, without unfair advantage or compromise to academic and professional standards.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to set out a transparent, fair and consistent framework for identifying, agreeing and implementing reasonable adjustments and for considering requests for special consideration. It describes how students can disclose relevant information, how evidence will be considered and how decisions will be communicated and recorded. The policy seeks to ensure that support is tailored to individual need, proportionate to the impact of the disability or circumstance and aligned with the requirements of the programme and any relevant professional or regulatory expectations.

The specific aims are to promote early identification of support needs, to encourage constructive dialogue between students, academic staff and professional services, and to embed inclusive practice in programme design and delivery. The policy also aims to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and are supported in meeting them, that decision making is informed by appropriate expertise, and that learning from cases is used to enhance systems and practices across ICCS.

Regulatory and Sector Context

In operating this policy ICCS has regard to the Equality Act 2010 and associated case law, which establish a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and applicants and to avoid discrimination arising from disability. The college also considers its obligations under data protection and human rights legislation, including the need to respect privacy and confidentiality while responding effectively to disclosed needs. Where programmes lead to awards that are subject to additional professional, statutory or regulatory requirements, these expectations will also inform decisions about what adjustments are reasonable and permissible.

The policy is further informed by regulatory and sector guidance, including requirements of awarding organisations, expectations of Ofqual where regulated qualifications are offered, and good practice promoted by bodies such as the Office for Students, the Department for Education and relevant sector agencies. ICCS is committed to reviewing the policy regularly to ensure that it remains aligned with developments in legislation, regulation and professional standards and continues to reflect evolving practice in inclusive education.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy a reasonable adjustment is a change that is made to remove or reduce a substantial disadvantage experienced by a disabled student in relation to learning, teaching or assessment, compared with students who are not disabled. Adjustments may relate to the physical environment, teaching and learning approaches, access to learning materials or the conduct of assessments and may be anticipatory or made in response to an individual disclosure. The test of reasonableness takes into account factors such as effectiveness, practicality, resource implications and the need to preserve academic and professional standards.

Special consideration refers to a post event adjustment to the mark or outcome of an assessment, or to the opportunity to take or retake an assessment, in recognition of serious temporary circumstances that have affected a student performance, such as illness, bereavement or other significant personal disruption. Special consideration is not a substitute for reasonable adjustment where a long term condition is known, and it will not normally be applied where the integrity of the assessment or award would be compromised. The policy distinguishes clearly between these concepts so that expectations are understood and managed appropriately.

Scope

This policy applies to all applicants and enrolled students at ICCS, including apprentices and students studying with collaborative partners where ICCS has responsibility for the delivery or assessment of programmes. It covers taught modules, examinations, coursework, practical and clinical assessments, and other forms of summative assessment for which ICCS or a partner awarding organisation is responsible. The policy also informs arrangements for learning and teaching activities, including access to digital learning environments, placements and fieldwork, where adjustments may be required to ensure equitable participation.

Requests for reasonable adjustment or special consideration relating to qualifications, assessments or services that are wholly controlled by an external organisation may be subject to that organisation rules. In such cases ICCS will provide advice and support to students in understanding and navigating the relevant processes. The policy does not normally apply to matters that are more appropriately addressed under other procedures, such as appeals against assessment decisions, complaints about service quality or allegations of academic misconduct, although there may be links between these areas which ICCS will consider carefully.

Principles

The ICCS approach to reasonable adjustment and special consideration is based on principles of fairness, inclusion and academic integrity. Adjustments and consideration will be determined on an individual basis, informed by relevant evidence and professional judgement, and will seek to remove or reduce disadvantage without lowering learning outcomes or compromising competence standards. Wherever possible, arrangements will be anticipatory, aiming to reduce the need for case by case adjustments by embedding inclusive design in curricula, assessment strategies and learning resources.

Students will be encouraged to disclose needs at the earliest opportunity and to engage actively in discussions about appropriate support. ICCS will handle disclosures sensitively and confidentially, sharing information only with those who need it in order to put agreed arrangements in place. Decisions will be communicated clearly and within reasonable timescales, and students will be advised of their right to request a review or to appeal where they believe procedures have not been followed correctly. Staff involved in decision making will have access to appropriate guidance and training.

Process for Requesting Reasonable Adjustments

Students who wish to request reasonable adjustments are expected to contact the designated student support or academic administration service as soon as they become aware of a need for support. Requests should normally be made in writing and should explain the nature of the disability or condition, how it affects study and assessment, and what types of adjustment are sought. Where appropriate, students may be invited to a meeting to explore needs in more detail and to consider a range of possible approaches, including the use of assistive technologies, alternative formats or modified assessment arrangements.

Following receipt of a request ICCS will review the information provided and may seek further clarification or supporting evidence where necessary. Decisions will be made by authorised staff, drawing on relevant professional advice where appropriate, and will take into account the requirements of the programme, the feasibility of proposed adjustments and any applicable awarding organisation regulations. Agreed adjustments will be recorded and communicated to relevant teaching and administrative staff, and their effectiveness will be kept under review in discussion with the student. Adjustments may be varied over time as needs or circumstances change.

Special Consideration

Applications for special consideration should normally be made promptly after the assessment or event to which they relate and no later than the deadline published by ICCS or the relevant awarding organisation. Students are expected to explain clearly the circumstances that affected their performance, why those circumstances could not reasonably have been mitigated in advance and how they impacted on the assessment concerned. Wherever possible, applications should be supported by independent evidence, such as medical documentation, official reports or other relevant confirmation of the circumstances described.

Requests for special consideration will be considered by authorised staff in accordance with this policy and any applicable awarding organisation or regulatory requirements. Outcomes may include allowing a further attempt at the assessment without academic penalty, discounting an attempt or, in strictly limited circumstances, adjusting marks within defined parameters. Special consideration will not normally be granted where a student has already been given the opportunity to sit an assessment under adjusted conditions or where granting the request would undermine competence standards, professional requirements or the credibility of the award.

Data Protection, Confidentiality and Records

ICCS recognises that information relating to disability, health and personal circumstances is sensitive and will handle such data in accordance with data protection legislation and college policies on data protection and records management. Personal data will be collected only where necessary for the purpose of considering and implementing reasonable adjustments or special consideration and will be retained securely for no longer than is required for these purposes and for audit or regulatory requirements. Access to such information will be restricted to staff who need it in order to carry out their legitimate duties.

Students will be informed about how their information will be used and with whom it may be shared, and consent will be sought where appropriate. In some circumstances ICCS may need to share limited information without consent, for example where there is a significant concern about the safety of the student or others, or where there is a legal obligation to disclose. Records of requests, decisions and adjustments will be maintained to support consistency, transparency and monitoring, and will contribute to institutional understanding of patterns of demand and areas for enhancement.

Malpractice, Misuse and Right of Appeal

Deliberate misuse of this policy, such as submitting false or misleading information, falsifying evidence or seeking adjustments or special consideration on grounds known to be invalid, may be treated as malpractice or misconduct and will be dealt with under the ICCS Malpractice, Maladministration and Fraud Prevention Policy and relevant student or staff disciplinary procedures. ICCS will, however, recognise that students may sometimes present incomplete information or find it difficult to articulate their circumstances and will seek to respond with sensitivity and appropriate guidance in such cases.

Students who consider that this policy has not been applied correctly in their case, or that a decision about reasonable adjustment or special consideration is inconsistent with the evidence provided, may request a review or submit an appeal in accordance with the ICCS Appeals Policy. The focus of any appeal will normally be on whether procedures were followed properly and whether the decision reached was reasonable in the light of the available information, rather than on substituting a new academic judgement. Information about how to request a review or appeal will be provided with decision notifications.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of this Policy

ICCS will monitor the implementation of this policy through routine reporting on the number and type of adjustments and special consideration requests, feedback from students and staff, and findings from internal and external quality assurance processes. Trends and themes will be considered by relevant committees and management groups, and where appropriate will inform action planning in relation to inclusive practice, staff development, resource allocation and curriculum or assessment design.

This policy will normally be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or sector guidance, or if monitoring indicates that revisions are needed to improve clarity, effectiveness or consistency. Revisions will be developed in consultation with students, staff and other stakeholders as appropriate and will be approved through established ICCS governance processes to ensure that arrangements remain robust, transparent and aligned with the strategic aims and values of the college.

References

- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the United Kingdom General Data Protection Regulation UK GDPR.
- Human Rights Act 1998, in so far as it relates to the fair treatment of disabled students and those with long term health conditions.
- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition and relevant awarding organisation guidance on reasonable adjustments and special consideration.
- Guidance from the Office for Students and the Department for Education on inclusive practice and support for disabled students.
- Sector guidance on inclusive teaching, learning and assessment issued by recognised United Kingdom sector bodies and agencies.