



Library Services for Students with Disabilities

Policy Document

Galway Campus

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Introduction

Special needs education is the special educational arrangements that are in place for people with disabilities. The library is committed to providing equal access for all and has a commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities. This document outlines how inclusion is achieved in the Galway (Dublin Road) campus library, and the arrangements that are in place to help students with a disability.

The library offers additional services to students with a disability and aims to respond to individual needs.

Aim of Document

The aim of this document is to clearly illustrate how the library will endeavour to meet the needs of students with disabilities, ensuring that they have equal access to library resources using assistive technology and the aid of library staff. This document sets out the library's policy in respect of students with a disability.

Definitions

The Disability Act is one of a range of acts designed to ensure that the needs of all users are met as fully as possible. These acts include:

- Equal Status (Amendment) Act 2012
- Education for persons with special needs Act 2004
- The Disability Act 2005

These Acts are designed to improve the participation of people with disabilities in society by ensuring that services and facilities are in place that will improve their access to public services.

The main areas that the Acts provide for are: the prevention of discrimination on the grounds of a disability; the independent assessment of needs, access to public buildings, services and information; and the placing of an obligation on public bodies to be pro-active in employing people with disabilities.

The term ‘disability’ is used in this document as defined in the Disability Act 2005:

“*Disability*”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the State or to participate in social or cultural life in the State by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment.

1. Basic information

GMIT's main library, which is situated in the Learning and IT Resource Centre, is an important information and resource base for students and staff of the institution. The library measures 4,086sq.m and can seat up to 650 readers. Membership is automatically conferred on all registered students and staff.

1.1 Registration

Students with disabilities should contact the Access Office as early as possible in the academic year so that appropriate support can be arranged. Once registered with the Access & Disability Office, students are automatically registered with the library for the use of specialist assistive technology and other available dedicated facilities.

The Access & Disability Office can be contacted by telephone on +353 (0) 91 742392

Email: accessoffice@gmit.ie

1.2 Contact Staff

The library works closely with student services, specifically the learning support tutors, to ensure accessibility of library resources and facilities to users with a disability.

GMIT has a number of learning support tutors who work with registered students who have a disability. The learning support tutors are Ms. Jenny Gill and Ms. Mary Conway. Tutors may be contacted through the Access & Disability Administrator, Theresa Byrne on 091-742392 or Email: AccessOffice@gmit.ie.

Queries on the services and products available in the library for students with disabilities should be directed to Kathryn Briggs in the library on 091-742789 or by emailing Library@gmit.ie. In addition, library staff are available to offer assistance with library services at all times.

1.3 Accessibility

The entrance to the new building is just outside the library. Wheelchair users can enter the building through the automatic door. Disabled parking is available directly outside the entrance to the new building in the restricted parking area.

The library entrance is fully accessible by wheelchair. The library consists of two floors; accessible by stairs and an elevator. A disabled toilet is located in the main staff office. In addition, a fully accessible toilet is located on the ground floor of the new building, in the corridor immediately outside the library.

The information desk is situated to the left on entering the library. It has two height levels to accommodate wheelchair users. There is also a self-issue station, situated just inside the main entrance of the library, for issuing and returning books without coming to the information desk.

1.4 Emergency Procedures

A number of library staff are qualified First Aiders. Please report accidents or emergencies in the library to staff at the information desk.

In the event of a fire, designated Fire Wardens, along with all library staff, will be involved in evacuating the library and ensuring that all patrons have safely left the building.

Designated Fire Wardens in the library:

- ☛ Bernie Lally
- ☛ Catherine McTigue
- ☛ Maura Stephens
- ☛ Margaret Waldron

In the case of a fire the lifts should not be used. If you are on the 1st floor of the library and cannot use stairs unaided, you should wait for the emergency services in the emergency exit staircase just outside the lift.

1.5 Loop for impaired hearing

A portable loop system has been installed at the library information desk. It can be used by people with suitable hearing aids, allowing them to speak with the person at the desk while blocking out interfering background noise.

2. Library Services

The information desk is located on the ground floor of the library. This may be used for borrowing and returning books, account queries, reservations and bookings and for help in locating or retrieving library materials. Support is available for assistance in making photocopies, using the catalogue or using specialised equipment.

In addition, relevant Subject Librarians in the library can help with finding information, using relevant electronic resources and so on. Please enquire at the information desk; you may need to make an appointment.

The Subject Librarians are:

- ✦ Business – Maura Stephens
- ✦ Engineering – Kathryn Briggs
- ✦ Galway International Hotel School – Bernie Lally
- ✦ Science – Catherine McTigue

2.1 Alternative Induction

Student inductions are a great way to ensure that students are aware of all the facilities available to them for their research. General library inductions are arranged for all first years. Alternative inductions for individuals or any number of students can be arranged through the Access Office or by contacting the library directly. Students will be provided with introductory packs containing useful information about library services and facilities.

2.2 The Library Catalogue

The library catalogue lists all the items held in the library, along with information about students' library accounts. The catalogue can be accessed from any PC in the library, simply log-in and go to <https://library.gmit.ie> In addition, there are two dedicated library catalogue PCs on the ground floor that are wheelchair accessible.

2.3 Materials Retrieval

Books, journals, and other library materials can be retrieved on behalf of a disabled student by library staff. Students can ask at the information desk for an item to be retrieved or ask a member of staff to accompany them to the shelf to retrieve an item.

2.4 Borrowing

A current GMIT ID card is required for borrowing.

- ☛ Students may borrow 5 books from general stock at any one time, for a period of two weeks. Books may be renewed if not requested by other users for a further two weeks.
- ☛ Desk Reserve material and theses may be used in the library for up to three hours.
- ☛ Reference material, journals and exam papers may only be used in the library.

A postal service will be provided to students who are unable to visit the library in person. For information please contact:

Deirdre Geoghegan on 091-742793

Email: deirdre.geoghegan@gmit.ie

Items that are on loan or held in other GMIT campus libraries (Mayo, CCAM and Letterfrack) can be requested at the desk by filling out a request form, or online by using the request button on the Library Catalogue.

2.5 My Library Account

Accounts can be checked on and off campus at “My Library Account” from the library web page. To access My Library Account, go to <http://library.gmit.ie>.

Students can:

- ☛ Check Current Loans
- ☛ Request Items on Loan or Items Available in Other Campuses
- ☛ See Lists of Previous Loans
- ☛ Renew Books
- ☛ View and Print Exam Papers
- ☛ Access and Search Electronic Resources
- ☛ Submit a Document Supply Request

2.6 Ask a Librarian

All students can contact a member of the library staff for information regarding library services or help accessing material by emailing <mailto:library@gmit.ie>.

3. Facilities

Library facilities are very important. All students need access to relevant study materials and information, as well as a quiet place to study.

The library has several dedicated rooms that students can avail of to aid them in their study and research. These rooms are intended to provide the extra facilities that are needed for activities relating to their program of study.

Dedicated rooms include:

- Independent Learning Unit
- IT Training room
- Silent room
- Copy, print & scan room
- Training room
- Archive room
- Group Study rooms

3.1 Independent Learning Unit (ILU)

The Independent Learning Unit provides assistive technology services to readers with visual, learning, mobility and hearing impairments.

Located on the ground floor of the library the unit consists of specialist hardware and software which are designed to make the academic challenge easier and to make information available in a wider range of accessible formats.

Tutors are available to advise students on resources to best suit their needs and to provide technical support in the use of the equipment.

3.1.1 Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is a term for any device, piece of equipment, system, or software that allows an individual to perform a task they would otherwise be unable to do. This technology increases the ease and safety with which the task can be performed. Some assistive technology is specifically designed to support people with disabilities or impairments in their everyday tasks. In the library it is used to support independent learning and to increase the accessibility of materials. Some examples of assistive technology include voice recognition systems, voice synthesis, and alternative computer input devices such as a tracker ball.

3.1.1.1 Hardware

PCs

Five PCs, housed in the Independent Learning Unit, are reserved for students with disabilities. These PCs have low vision and other specialist software installed and all have 19-inch flat panel monitors for a larger than customary viewable area.

All PCs in the library are accessible to students with disabilities for accessing the Internet and utilising Microsoft Office. The library is also wireless-enabled, if students wish to bring their own laptop and software.

Flatbed Scanners

Two scanners are available for converting printed documents, books or photos into an electronic format. These scanners have a flat plane of glass where the item being scanned is placed.

Roller/Tracker Ball and Joystick

These devices are available for those with sensory and mobility difficulties when using a mouse. The roller/tracker balls facilitate minimal hand movement as they are stationary, and the user moves the ball with their fingertips to input instructions to the computer. Joysticks are used for students with limited hand function as they can find them easier to use than a mouse.

Aladdin Genie Pro CCTV Reader

The Aladdin Genie Pro is a low vision reading system designed to magnify text and photographs for low vision readers. It can be used as a stand-alone system to view books, documents and many other print items, and it is also connected to a PC with a 19-inch flat panel monitor. Students can use the PC's SVGA monitor to display both their computer information and the video magnified image.

QuickLink Pen

The QuickLink Pen is an electronic highlighter that allows the student to copy and store printed text, web links, tables and charts, from books and documents, and transfer the data to a computer.

Olympia Portable Hand-Held Magnifier

This lightweight device magnifies text and pictures. This portable magnification system allows for freedom on the move.

Special Keyboards

Three special keyboards provide enlarged and bold printed keys to assist persons with low vision and mobility problems

Earpiece Headsets

Headsets are beneficial for students with restricted use of arms or hands. Three headsets are available with microphones and loudspeakers, so students can speak and hear. Headsets are also used when using voice recognition software.

Printers

All PC's in the library are attached to the multifunctional machines in the copy, print & scan room; printing is free for students who are registered with the access office.

Printing from Wi-Fi is available using <https://print.gmit.ie> as your printer.

3.1.1.2 Software

Kurzweil 3000

This product can read any scanned document or electronic file using synthetic speech. Words are highlighted in a contrasting colour to the document background for ease of use when reading. Kurzweil 3000 is a scanning, reading and writing programme designed to assist people with specific learning difficulties. The focus of this programme is to increase reading speed and comprehension.

Kurzweil 1000

This is a scanning, reading and writing software programme for use by people who are blind or visually impaired. Text is scanned into a pc using a scanner and is read aloud by a synthetic voice.

Dragon Naturally Speaking

This voice recognition software allows a user to enter text and control most computer functions using speech. It is beneficial to people with specific learning difficulties and allows for individuals with mobility impairments, who might have difficulty with a traditional keyboard or mouse, to use a computer effectively. Modern voice recognition software operates in a continuous speech mode which allows users to speak in a normal conversational tone and speed.

Features include:

- ⇒ Create email, instant messages and documents just by speaking
- ⇒ Surf the web by voice
- ⇒ Dictate directly in to almost any Microsoft application
- ⇒ Play back dictation for easier correction and proofing
- ⇒ Controls menus and dialog boxes by voice in almost any Microsoft application

TextHelp Read and Write Gold

This software is for people with reading and writing difficulties. It is a word processing package designed for users with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. It will highlight, read and speak text and offer word correction and completion.

ZoomText Level 2

This is a magnification and screen-reading programme designed for people with low vision.

Features include:

- ⇒ 2X to 16X magnification
- ⇒ 8 different zoom windows for full and partial screen enlargement
- ⇒ Command interface for Dragon Naturally Speaking
- ⇒ Speaks all text, including menus and dialog boxes
- ⇒ Echoes keyboard typing by word or character

Office 365

A set of interrelated desktop applications including Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Access are available on all PCs in the library.

3.2 Study Rooms

Study rooms catering for groups of 2-8 people are located on the 1st floor of the library. All study rooms are wheelchair accessible and accessed via the lift from the ground floor. Bookings can be made online via <https://library.gmit.ie>, at the library information desk or by phoning 091-742795.

3.3 Self-Service Station

The library operates a self-service station which allows students to check out, renew and return books without being served by library staff at the information desk. The station is easy to use, and provides a printed receipt for every item issued, showing the date the item is due back. It is located on the ground floor, to the left of the information desk.

3.4 Photocopying

The library has three multifunctional self-service machines in the copy, print & scan room; photocopying is free for students who are registered with the access office. Alternatively, photocopying can be prepared by library staff on request, if a student is unable to use the photocopiers. Copies are requested at the desk and picked up at a time specified.

4. Training

Staff training is important to ensure that the library can meet the needs and expectations of its users. Furthermore, user training is essential to show the services that are available and to encourage users to feel more comfortable using our services and facilities.

4.1 Assistive Technology

Assistive technology training is provided to students, if needed, by the learning support tutors. Additional support is provided by library staff if any problems or issues occur with assistive technology in the ILU.

Training on assistive technology is provided for library staff by the Systems Librarian at regular intervals throughout the year, especially as part of the summer training schedule.

4.2 Disability Awareness

It is essential that staff understand the needs of users with a disability and can respond to them appropriately. Staff may be anxious, or unsure about how best to deal with those with a disability; they may have problems communicating with someone who is deaf, or they may not know how to deal with a person in a wheelchair. The learning support tutor understands the needs and problems of those with disabilities and the barriers they face. Library staff that do not have personal experience of disability benefit from disability awareness training. The learning support tutors are available to educate staff on disability awareness and training sessions are arranged when necessary.

4.3 Monitor & Review

Monitoring is essential for the development of standards. The regular practice of quality control is required to ensure technological advancements are met and the quality of service continues.

Advances in technology provide people with the opportunity to communicate more efficiently; these advances are especially important to those with a disability. It is crucial to keep up to date with technological improvements and to ensure that all software available is the most current.

The library encourages feedback in relation to its services and facilities through the library's online suggestion form as well as a suggestion box which is located just inside the main entrance. We also monitor the use of our services and facilities, which helps to develop and improve our services.

This policy will be reviewed every five years. The time frame is in line with both GMIT and the library's strategic plans. Any member of staff who is dissatisfied with the content or the implementation of this policy may request a review at any time.

5. Useful Links

- AHEAD-Association of Higher Education Access and Disability
<http://www.ahead.ie>
- Assist Ireland
<http://www.assistireland.ie/>
- British Dyslexia Association
<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk>
- Deaf Hear
<http://www.deafhear.ie/>
- Dyslexia.com
<http://www.dyslexic.com>
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland
<http://www.dyslexia.ie>
- Equality Authority
<http://www.equality.ie>
- Irish Deaf Society
<http://www.irishdeafsociety.ie/>
- Irish Wheelchair Association
<http://www.iwa.ie>
- Irish Sign Language
<https://www.irishdeafsociety.ie/irish-sign-language/>
- National Bureau for Students with Disabilities - SKILL
<http://www.skill.org.uk>
- National Council for the Blind Ireland - NCBI
<http://www.ncbi.ie>
- National Disability Authority - NDA
<http://www.nda.ie>

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A working group was set up in March 2008 to prepare a policy document on Library Services for Students with Disabilities for the Galway, Dublin Rd. campus library.

This version of the policy document was updated in October 2018.

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