Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Disability

Contents

The Policy

1. About the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's Inclusivity Policy & Protocols

1.1 The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School's Inclusivity Policy and Protocols is designed to embed and support an inclusive environment for all members of the School, from staff to students and beyond. There are several sections to the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols, including:

- Allyship & Being an Active Bystander
- Bereavement Support
- Disabilities
- Gender Identity
- Health and Wellbeing
- Religious Belief and Religious Observance
- Sexuality and Sexual Orientation
- Tackling Racial Inequality
- UWE's Fitness to Study

2. About this section of the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Disability

2.1 The school is committed to ensuring the inclusion of all students regardless of complex and diverse needs such as disabilities including physical/sensory impairments, mental health difficulties, learning differences, and neurodiversities.

2.2 This is section of the Policy and Protocols is intended to support and facilitate a student's ability to engage positively and fully with their programme of study and to fulfil the expectations of the training and course regardless of any disability, impairment, or other support need. It also aims to support and facilitate the experience of current and prospective staff of the School. It is a policy designed to support the needs of all students and staff.

3. The Social Model of Disability

3.1 The School operates under the Social Model of Disability. The 'Social Model' takes the view that society creates barriers that 'disable' people from participating fully and on an equal basis with others. Wherever possible, these barriers ought to be removed. The School has a commitment to removing unnecessary barriers during the application and audition or interview processes and throughout training or employment contract, and to providing appropriate support so that all students and staff can achieve their full potential

4. Context and terminology

4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

4.2 A substantial impairment is when the effects of an impairment, while not minor nor trivial, may be alleviated or removed by aids or on-going treatment. An impairment which has lasted, or is expected to last, more than 12 months is considered long-term. This definition includes those who have had a disability in the past and/or whose impairment is fluctuating or recurring.

4.3   A disability can arise from a wide range of impairments, including but not limited to):

- Sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing
- Impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as depression, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome (ME) and epilepsy
- Progressive conditions, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, forms of dementia
- Organ specific conditions, including respiratory problems, such as asthma, and cardiovascular diseases, including thrombosis, stroke, and heart disease
- Cancer, HIV/AIDs, Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are covered from the point of diagnosis, even if symptoms have yet to occur
- Specific learning differences, such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia and Dyspraxia
- Mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, bipolar affective disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, personality disorders. Depressive illnesses can amount to disabilities where they are long-term.

5. Purpose of the Policy: Scope and Principles

5.1   This Policy and Protocols applies to students studying on a course of Higher Education who are registered students of the School. This Policy and Protocols also applies to staff employed by the School.

5.2   This section is particularly relevant to disabled staff and students including those with specific learning differences, mental health conditions, sensory and physical impairments, and other diverse and complex needs. The protocols outline the support that should be provided to an individual who discloses disability. It is important to make sure that anyone who discloses a disability feels included and supported the School.

5.3   This section is also relevant for staff and students without impairments who are directly supporting a person with an impairment. More broadly, it also seeks to support and encourage an inclusive environment for the entire School community.

5.4   The Policy and Protocols are aimed at all staff, particularly those who manage staff or support or teach students.

5.5   Although the Policy and Protocols provide a framework within which disabled staff or students can be supported during their employment or education, this process should be very much informed by the individual concerned and they should be thoroughly consulted along the way.

5.6   Whatever the individual circumstances, the School is committing to being flexible, supportive, and making clear that discrimination and harassment against disabled people will not be tolerated.

6. Legislative Context

6.1   There are three pieces of legislation that are relevant to disabled people in a Higher Education setting:

6.1.1   Equality Act 2010

6.1.2   Data Protection Act 2018 (UK)

6.1.3   General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (UK) 2018

6.2   Equality Act 2010

6.2.1   Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Following this act, public

bodies, such as higher education providers, must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2.2   Public bodies are required to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into their day-to-day business and to consider how a function can affect different groups in different ways. This enables a higher education provider to reasonably anticipate the needs of disabled staff, students, and visitors and to address the potential impacts of any proposed changes to ensure they do not have an adverse effect.

6.3   Data Protection Act 2018 (UK) and General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (UK)

6.3.1   The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) complements the EU's General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and adds provisions specific to the UK. It has brought stricter rules and tighter controls on personal data. Information about a person's health and/or disability is considered 'special category data' under the Data Protection Act 2018. This data is subject to tighter controls than other personal data. Explicit consent is required before it can be collected, used and shared.

6.3.2   The General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR) covers the data protection principles, rights and obligations set out in the Data Protection Act 2018. The lawful bases for processing personal data are set out in Article 6 of the GDPR. Articles 9 and 10 of the GDPR apply to the processing of 'special category' data (commonly referred to as 'personal sensitive data').

6.3.3   Personal data must be looked after properly following the seven data protection principles, which include ensuring personal data is accurate, secure and processed fairly and lawfully.

6.3.4   Under the DPA and GDPR, 'special category data' is afforded an extra level of confidentiality and will nearly always require explicit consent from the individual concerned prior to disclosure to another party. The School also has a responsibility under the DPA and GPDR to ensure that personal information is accurate and up to date, so it is important that the School holds a correct title and name.

7. Disclosure and Confidentiality

7.1   The School will respect the confidentiality of disabled people and will not reveal information without the prior agreement of the individual.

7.2   The decision of whether or not to disclose a disability and the timing of any disclosure belongs entirely to the individual. However, if opportunities have been given to disclose a disability and an individual decides not to then the School will not be able to offer them individual support or adjustments.

7.3   The School will manage the process of information sharing and will treat all personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Access to disability-related information will be provided on a need-to-know basis only, in order for reasonable adjustments to be

implemented.

7.4   Where a student is on a placement as part of their degree course, requests for any reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act (2010) should be made and managed under Support Through Studies, as well as any additional reasonable adjustments which may be specifically required for collaborative/external activity

8. Protection Against Harassment and Bullying

8.1   All staff, students and other stakeholders should expect to be treated with respect at all times. All complaints of harassment or bullying will be treated seriously and thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action can be taken in cases where bullying/harassment have been proved.

3.1   Any act of harassment or bullying toward a person based on disability will normally, in first instances, be dealt Schoolith under UWE's policy for Bullying and Harassment of or by Students.

The Protocols

Protocol Aim	Protocol	How this might be achieved	Supporting guidance and information
Supporting prospective and current students	**Application and admission**	• **Ensure applicants are given ample opportunity to disclose any disability, impairment, or support need on their application form and at other points in the admissions cycle.** • **Clearly publish information regarding format and purpose of auditions, interviews, and personal statements.** • **Endeavour to offer a multifaceted, cohesive, holistic, demystified, and 'non-traditional' application, assessment and admissions process that may include the opportunity for remote video auditions and interviews for students unable to attend in person, a variety of additional information-gathering methods, such as showreels, interviews with 'targeted questions', and personal statements that ask 'targeted questions'.**	The School welcomes applications from disabled people and judges applicants solely on their talent and potential to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. We are committed to admitting and supporting disabled students and warmly encourage applicants to inform the School so that appropriate support can be put into place as soon as possible. It is the School's policy to invite all applicants to attend an audition or interview. To make this process as fair as possible, it is important that applicants inform the School of the kind of support they may need for application. There is a space on the application form for applicants to declare any impairment or condition, for example dyslexia or other learning difficulty, a physical or sensory impairment or a long term medical or mental health condition that might have an impact on the audition or interview process, or on subsequent training. It is the School's responsibility to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made so that there are no unnecessary barriers.

| Supporting prospective and current students | Current students | • **Clearly publish information regarding on course support including diagnostic tools, counselling, and other supports** | A comprehensive review of all support offered across the School can be found in the Guide to Student Support published on the School's website website. Below is a brief summary.

- **Disabled Student's Allowances (DSAs):** DSAs are Government grants available to eligible disabled students on higher education courses in the UK to help with extra course costs they may incur during their course as a direct result of their disability. The allowances can help to pay for a non-medical personal helper, items of specialist equipment, assistive software, travel, and other course-related costs. The allowance is neither means-tested nor repayable. DSAs are not available to all students, but are subject to eligibility criteria, which are stated on the Gov.uk website, together with the amounts payable.
- **Counselling, Mental Health and Wellbeing Services**: The School can help students to arrange to see a counsellor free of charge. The School uses the services of Problemshared to offer online counselling through a range of therapists. |
| | | • **Follow guidance published in the School's 'Good Practice Guide to Inclusive Teaching'.** | The School has also published a Guide to Inclusive Teaching which seeks to provide information and advice on how all teaching practice can be made as inclusive as possible. Examples of inclusive teaching include:
- Well-structured classes, workshops, and other teaching so that if concentration is impacted (by, for example, slow speed of processing or challenges with organisation or sequencing skills) re-engagement can be achieved through clarity of session format.
- Deadlines for written work in advance and clearly described academic tasks which means assessment timetable is clear for all.

- Clear and legible written (or oral) summary feedback (including that arising from feedback meetings or sessions), highlighting both good |

Supporting prospective and current students	Current students		contribution to classes, written work, and aspects requiring further development. - Proactive management of group discussions to help reduce anxiety felt by students about making a contribution and also stem over-contributions from individuals. - Sufficient time for completion of tasks.

	Support through Studies
	
	Support through Studies
		• **Ensure that processes under UWE's Fitnes to train policy, whether formal or informal policy are thoroughly followed:**
		   o Both formal procedures and informal resolution can make use of support/ action plans.
		
		• **Ensure all students are aware of the Support through Studies Policy and how it can support them.**
		
		• **Aim for maximum flexibility in responding to request for reasonable adjustments for example:**
		   o Provision of reading lists that indicate to students which readings are considered to be key to the course or particularly relevant to a session or theme within the course.
		   o Provision of assessment format alongside adjustments such as extra time, a separate or familiar room with opportunity to familiarise in advance.
		   o Consideration of adjustments to assessment scheduling.
			UWE's Fitness to Train policy refers to a student's ability to engage positively and fully with their programme of study and to fulfil the expectations of the training and course.
			
			Fitness to Train compromises of informal frontline resolutions and more formal procedures. The policy has three stages under which a student may be formally referred, although the principles can be informally followed where appropriate. When the Fitness to Train policy is being used, even informally, the student should always be made aware of this.
			
			It is important to remember that the Support Through Studies Policy is intended to be a positive and supportive process rather than a punitive one. Support Through Studies should create a dialogue that allows student to take ownership of their education and training.
			
			As part of informal frontline resolutions, student may be offered Learning Plans/Agreements. This is an agreement between the student and the School. It is a written statement that describes the type of support required and how this is provided. A Learning Plan/Agreement can be put in place at any time if a need is identified.
			This is intended to be practical and positive to ensure that everyone's needs are met. This can guarantee, for example, that all course documents are

Supporting prospective and current students			- Permission to record lectures or take notes on a computer, and access to lecture capture. - Library adjustments including extended loans. - Provision of a specialist SpLD tutor or mentor via DSA funding (if needed) to help students develop strategies for managing stress, the impact of their condition, maintain realistic study patterns and develop a sustainable and effective routine. - Additional preparation and support for placements, presentations, work experience and national or international visits/exchanges to offset stress and to anticipate and identify further barriers in a timely way.	available in a range of formats; that any filmed material presented is captioned; and that arrangements are made for note-takers, communication support workers etc. A senior member of staff or a dyslexia specialist will arrange a meeting before or as near the start of the course as possible to produce the Learning Plan/Agreement. There will be regular meetings to review and revise this plan to ensure that it is still fit for purpose. Learning Plans/Agreements may also include reasonable adjustments. These are changes made to the teaching, learning and/or assessment of a course to enable a student to fully participate in class. Reasonable adjustment may also include alternative assessments such as: - a viva, - group discussion, or - visual presentation instead of written work. These assessments are not to be an 'easy option' or provided on 'compassionate grounds'. They should be equally demanding in terms of research, preparation, and organisation of ideas. Work presented in an 'alternative' way should be equally rigorous in terms of the learning outcomes, even if students use a different route to display this and assessors should be prepared to use the full range of marks when grading the work. The formal Support Through Studies procedures may be instigated to provide structured, individual support to a student. The policy is designed to provide a framework within which a School can hold a dialogue with a student and agree, as far as possible, on what the School might reasonably expect of the student and what the student might reasonably expect of the School.

The School employs its own staff independently and decides how to recruit, hire, and manage its staff.

The below is a set of best practice and guiding principles that the School should consider when developing staff-related policies, processes, and procedures.

Protocol Aim	Protocol	• How this might be achieved	Supporting guidance and information
Supporting prospective and current staff	**Fulfilling the Equality Act**	• **Ensure there is internal expertise and knowledge of the Equality Act and other relevant legislation within the school.**	It is against the law for employers to discriminate people because of a disability. The Equality Act 2010 protects employees and applicants and covers the following areas: • application forms • interview arrangements • aptitude or proficiency tests • job offers • terms of employment, including pay • promotion, transfer, and training opportunities • dismissal or redundancy • discipline and grievance
	Recruitment and Application **Recruitment and Application**	• **Employment criteria shown in the job descriptions and vacancy advertisements should be significant, objective, and appropriate to that particular post.** o It would be inappropriate, for example, to specify a high level of mobility for a sedentary post. • **Job advertisements should be non-discriminatory and written in a style that**	The School welcomes and encourages employment applications from disabled people. The School is committed to ensuing no employment advertisement and job description presents unnecessary barriers to individuals. Under the Equality Act 2010, a potential employer can only ask about health or disability in the following ways: • to help decide if a person is able to carry out a task that is an essential part of the role; • to find out if a person is able to take part in an interview;

| Supporting prospective and current staff | | encourages applications from **underrepresented groups, including those with impairments, as defined by the Equality Act 2010**

• **When inviting prospective staff to an interview, ask if they require any specific arrangements to be made.** | • to decide is reasonable adjustments are needed for the selection process;
• if an employer is actively trying to increase the number of disabled people they employ;
• if an employer needs to know or the purposes of national security checks;

When inviting a candidate to interview, it is recommended that the School endeavours to ensure that an individual's needs are met by, for example:
• securing ground floor interview rooms,
• changing the font on question papers,
• printing assessments on coloured paper,
• allowing additional time to complete written assessments or tests. |
| | **Support for current staff** | • **Ensure there is internal expertise within school to assist and support prospective and current staff.**

• **It is good practice to make reasonable efforts to find suitable alternative employment or alternative employment with no loss of status or grade should a disabled staff member be unable to continue with their existing duties. This should also include appropriate training if required.**

• **It is good practice to periodically review their role and working conditions of disabled staff and especially if there are any changes to their disability. For example:**
    o **Disabled staff may be given the opportunity to meet annually to** | All staff employed at the School school should expect to be fully supported in the carrying out of their duties. In addition to reasonable working adjustments, a range of support may be offered to all staff that may be particularly relevant to those with complex and diverse needs.

Reasonable efforts will be made to enable a member of staff who becomes disabled or whose level of disability increases to continue working in the post in which they were originally employed. Staff may discuss making an application to [Access to Work](#) or similar support groups with their Line Manager to make an external assessment of their working environment and to recommend the purchase of supporting equipment.

In situations where suitable alternative work cannot be identified, or where an employee is unable to continue employment for reasons relating to their disability, it is best practice provide reasonable assistance to help that individual in their departure. This may include, but is not limited to:
• investigation into the possibility of retirement on grounds of ill health |

		discuss any current employment issues, training or developmental needs o **This could be part of the appraisal review procedure or a separate discussion**	• identification of appropriate external sources of advice and assistance A disabled employee cannot be chosen for redundancy because of their disability and an employee cannot be forced to retire if they become disabled. These practices are contravene the Equality Act 2010. The role and working conditions of disabled staff will be reviewed periodically, according to individual needs, and especially in light of any changes in their disability. Each disabled member of staff will have an opportunity at least annually to discuss any current employment issues they may have and any future training and development needs. Staff who have declared a disability may choose to include this discussion as part of their appraisal review or as a separate discussion following their annual appraisal.

Further Resources

General

For information and advise on many matters pertaining to Equality and Human Rights, visit: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

For equality and diversity training and resources, visit: https://equaliteach.co.uk/

Staff

For more on your rights in employment as a disabled person, visit: https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment

Students

For all student support offered by the School: oldvic.ac.uk

For information about the Disabled Students Allowances, visit: https://www.gov.uk/disabled-studentsallowances-dsas