



**St. Angela's College, Sligo**  
Coláiste San Aingeal, Sligeach



**NUI Galway**  
OÉ Gaillimh

# **Disability Support Service**

## **Student Services**

## **New Student Handbook**

**2020-2021**

**Áras Bríd**

**Room 30 Disability Support Office**

**This document is based on the New Student Handbook developed by Student Services and the Disability Support Service NUI Galway**



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**Disability Support Service Contact Details**

**Vivienne Ryan**

**Disability and Learning Support Officer,**

Room 30, Áras Bríd.

Email: [disability@stangelas.nuigalway.ie](mailto:disability@stangelas.nuigalway.ie)

Phone: 071 9195514

**Disability and Learning Support Office Opening Hours:**

**Monday - Friday 9.00 – 5.00**

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## Registering with Disability Support Service

To avail of supports from the Disability Support Service you must register with the service. We recommend you register as soon as you commence your studies in St Angela's College.

If you have significantly reduced mobility or if you have a sensory disability and require either an ISL interpreter or alternative format, please contact us before starting your course to allow us time to put supports in place for you.

## How to Register with the Disability Support Service

1. Provide the Disability Support Service with evidence of your disability. You can post, email or hand in your documentation to the office in Áras Bríd.

**Please note:** If you made a complete application to the **DARE scheme**, you do not need to resubmit your evidence of disability to our office. We can access your documentation from the CAO website.

2. When we have received your evidence of disability, we will make an appointment for you to meet the Disability Officer for an individual needs assessment.

4. To allow the Disability Support Service to arrange your supports and accommodations you must sign a Disclosure Consent Form.

Phone (071) 9195514

Email: [disability@stangelas.nuigalway.ie](mailto:disability@stangelas.nuigalway.ie) or

Call to the Disability Office during term time in Áras Bríd, Room 30.

## Disclosure

When a student discloses a disability, the Disability Officer will use this knowledge to assist the student to realise his/her full potential.

Information about disability is classed as 'sensitive personal' data and will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003.

The Disability Support Service will store your Evidence of Disability and other documentation in electronic format and will also maintain a securely held paper file. Your College transcript

will not include any information on your disability, significant on-going illness or specific learning disability.

### **Why do staff members need to know about my disability?**

The College has a duty under the Disability Act 2005, the Equal Status Acts 2000 & 2004 and the University Act 1997 to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. In order to provide you with appropriate supports and exam accommodations, relevant members of staff such as course leaders, lecturers, tutors, administrators in St. Angela's College and organisations/individuals outside the College such as exams boards, funding bodies and external placement providers need to know about your disability.

The reason for sharing information will normally be:

- To make **reasonable accommodations to meet individual needs**
- To facilitate College **communication** in respect of disability issues.
- **Statistical monitoring** and national returns (for example to the HEA or AHEAD)
- To ensure **health and safety**
- As may be required by law

### **How are staff members told about my Disability?**

The most common way of informing staff about your needs is the Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS). However, we may also email, meet with or phone colleagues to advise on disability related issues.

### **What is a Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS)?**

The Learning Educational Needs Summary (LENS) is a summary of the supports you need at St. Angela's College, relating to your disability. When you register you will have a needs assessment meeting with the Disability Officer to draw up a LENS. When you have given your written consent to disclosure, your LENS will be emailed to you and to your Head of Department to share with your lecturers and tutors.

The Disability Support Service highly recommends that you **hand a copy of your LENS to your lecturers yourself**; so you know your lecturers have seen this document. Many lecturers prefer students to share their LENS in this way, as it allows them to identify students who may need reasonable accommodations during the semester.

## **What if I don't want anyone to know about my disability?**

You may choose to keep all information about your disability entirely confidential so that information cannot be disclosed to any other person. It is your right to do this, but please be aware that the College will be restricted in its ability to meet your needs. If you choose not to disclose, some or all of the supports you need may not be put in place.

## **What if I change my mind?**

If you decide you want to make information about your needs either more or less confidential, contact the Disability Officer to arrange a meeting. You can then complete another Disclosure form with the Disability Officer.

## **Disclosure without Consent**

In exceptional circumstances, such as a risk to someone's life or criminal investigation, the College may be required to break a confidentiality request.

The College has a duty of care to students, staff and others, such as clinical and educational placement providers, which takes precedence over confidentiality where there is serious threat to the health and safety of a student or others.

Where disclosure without consent is deemed necessary, you should be informed of the intended actions; however, protecting your safety and the safety of others takes precedence.

## **Evidence of Disability**

All students need to need to provide evidence of their disability to register with the Disability Support Service and receive reasonable accommodations based on an individual needs assessment.

Please note: General Practitioner (GP) letters are not accepted as suitable medical evidence.

The Disability Officer must receive your evidence of disability before a needs assessment meeting can be carried out.

If you do not have appropriate evidence of your disability, you should forward the 'Evidence of Disability Form' to your Medical Consultant or Specialist to ask him/her to complete it.

**You may NOT need to complete the Evidence of Disability Form, if:**

- you have a **Specific Learning Difficulty**. Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) (e.g. dyslexia) should provide a copy of their most recent Educational Psychology Report. The report must confirm a diagnosis of dyslexia or other SLD and contain an assessment of cognitive ability and attainments in literacy and/or numeracy.
- you submitted a complete application to the **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)**. The Disability Support Service can access your evidence of disability from the CAO. You do not need to resubmit your evidence of disability to the Disability Support Service, unless your DARE application was incomplete.

## **European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities**

Most of the supports provided by the Disability Support Service to students with a disability are financed through European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities. The National Access Office, on behalf of the Department of Education & Skills, allocates this funding to disability support services in Higher Education Institutes, including St. Angela's College.

Funding is available to support most full-time undergraduates and postgraduate students studying in the third level sector. If you meet the eligibility criteria, the Disability Support Service apply to the National Access Office for funding on your behalf after your needs assessment meeting.

For further information on the fund, go to Student Finances website: [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie).



## **Access on Campus**

The College aims to minimise difficulties posed to students with mobility difficulties on campus. All of the College's newest buildings are accessible and when existing buildings are renovated, works to improve access are implemented. The College recognises that the age and design of some of its buildings may pose some constraints to students with reduced

mobility. Contact the Disability Officer if you find you have a problem with access on the campus.

## **Supports for All Students**

### **Personal and Academic Liaison (PAL)**

Every student is assigned a PAL, a member of the academic staff whose role is to act as a first point of contact with the College and to offer general academic and pastoral support. Your PAL will make arrangements to see you individually or in a group once a term. You can also arrange to see your PAL at other times if the need arises.

PALS effectively support student learning by:

- Reviewing your overall academic progress and providing feedback and advice.
- Providing appropriate information, support and guidance.
- Being available to you for consultation or referral, should you find yourself in difficulty academically or personally.

### **Student Mentoring Programme**

This programme was set up to offer peer support to all first year students starting at St Angela's College. Students from 2<sup>nd</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year volunteer to become mentors and undertake a training session. They then offer peer support to a number of first year students in their particular course. Mentors are there to offer advice and refer you to the appropriate services for any help you need.

### **Counselling**

College life can present challenges to students, which may give rise to uncertainties and difficulties at times. Work-related stress, study and exam anxieties, peer pressures, sexual conflicts, loneliness and questions of personal worth are among issues commonly experienced during college years. Counselling aims to help a student deal with the emotional impact of issues and find a positive way forward. A counselling service is available off campus. This service is absolutely confidential. Student Services and Student Union subsidise this service. Each student is allocated 6 free sessions per year, after this a minimal €10 student charge per session applies.

**Contact: 087 6609209 or Student Services 071-9195514 for appointment**



## **Chaplaincy**

The Chaplain gives expression to the College's commitment to the development of the whole person. The Catholic Chaplain resides on campus and collaborates with College colleagues and representatives of other faiths to provide social, spiritual and personal support for students as appropriate

## **TextHelp – Read & Write Gold**

TextHelp – Read & Write Gold is specialist literacy software that assists students to read, write and make texts accessible. It also has functions that assist students with study skills and research. The software has a text-to-speech function which allows you to listen while it reads on-screen text. Many of the functions can be used to edit and proof-read your written work. The College has a site license for TextHelp-Read Write Gold and it is available on all the computers in the College.

## **Inspiration Mind Mapping software**

Inspiration is mind mapping software that can be used to brainstorm, plan and organise projects, assignments and essays.

The College has a site licence for Inspiration and it is available on all the computers in the College.

## **Supports available from the Disability Support Service**

### **Learning Support**

The Learning Support Tutor offers learning support individually and in small group sessions. The aim of Learning Support is to assist students develop their skills in independent learning in the areas of time management, organisation, reading strategies, academic writing, examination strategies and assistive technology.

### **Assistive Technology**

Assistive technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

Assistive Technology (AT) equipment may include smart pens, screen-reading software and speech-to-text software. The AT needs of each student are assessed on a case-by-case basis. AT supports are discussed with you during your individual needs assessment. There may be a delay in issuing equipment to you at the start of the autumn semester. We appreciate your patience in the event you have to wait before you receive your AT equipment.

All AT equipment is granted-aided by the European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities. Under the terms of the funding criteria set out by the Higher Education Authority, on leaving St Angela's College you must return equipment allocated to you for less than three years duration.

Students who withdraw or take an approved leave of absence should return their equipment to the Disability Officer or Student Services Officer.

## **Reasonable Accommodations in Examinations**

Reasonable accommodations in examinations are put in place to ensure students with disabilities are treated fairly and equitably in the examination process, that they compete on an equal footing with their peers and that they can demonstrate their true knowledge and competence.

The Disability Support Service and the Examinations Office have adopted guidelines developed by the Disability Advisors' Working Network (DAWN) in 2012. DAWN is a network of disability advisors from over 25 higher education institutions in Ireland. DAWN produced guidelines to reflect good practice internationally and to ensure consistency nationally in granting examination accommodations to third level students.

Your individual exam accommodations will be agreed during your initial registration with the Disability Service and will be documented in your Learning Educational Needs Statement (LENS).

Examples of Exam Accommodations include:

- Taking exams in a small centre
- Extra time (10 mins per hour)

- SLD Sticker and Marking Guidelines
- Reader / Scribe

## **Official College Examinations Sessions**

The Disability Support Service and the Examinations Office put in place reasonable accommodations for end-of-term examinations which take place during official College examinations sessions. Examination timetables are available online approximately 4 weeks before examinations begin.

Please note:

1. Agreed accommodations will be automatically applied to all official, end-of-term College exams.
2. Your examination accommodations will remain unchanged for the duration of your course unless you request a review meeting.
3. The Disability Support Service will review your examination accommodations if you do not use the accommodations you have been granted.

When necessary, amendments to the timetable will be published on the website. Please check this link at regular intervals to ensure you have the latest details regarding your exams; it is your responsibility to know when and where your exams are being held.

## **In-class/In-term/In-house Assessments**

In-class and in-term assessments may be arranged by individual lecturers and Departments and may take place at any time during the semester.

The Disability Officer will send you a form for In Class Assessment Accommodations along with your LENS document.

If you need reasonable accommodations in an in-class or in-term assessment, you must discuss the accommodations required with the lecturer concerned well in advance of the assessment date. Provide your lecturer with a copy of your LENS and the completed In Class Accommodation form when you discuss your needs with him/her. The lecturer needs to have the LENS document because it confirms your registration with the Disability Support Service and contains information relevant to your request.

## **Printing & Photocopying**

Students who register with the Disability Support Service and are eligible for the European Social Fund for Students with Disabilities can receive printing and photocopying credit each academic year. To receive this credit; the Disability Officer must disclose your student number to a staff member in the ICT department.

## **Educational Support Workers**

Educational Support Workers (ESW) provide individual assistance to students with disabilities to support their learning and to help eliminate disadvantage caused by disability.

An educational support worker may act as note-taker, library assistant, laboratory assistant, personal assistant or academic tutor to a student.

Where an ESW worker acts as academic tutor providing subject-specific help to a student who has been absent due to their disability, the purpose of the support is to recap on missed lecture materials. ESW should not be asked to assist with assessed course work, to edit or proof-read written work or to give feedback on assignments.

An ESW will assist you to the best of his/her ability by recapping on your lecture materials, but your lecturer is your teacher and an expert in his/her discipline. Contact your lecturer for advice and feedback on your course content and your assignments.

When you work with an ESW, you are responsible for

- contacting the Disability Officer to request approval for ESW hours
- signing and completing 'Education Support Worker Forms'. You should never sign a blank 'Educational Support Worker Form'.
- agreeing mutually convenient times to meet in accordance with the number of hours approved by the Disability Support Service. Agree a suitable meeting place.
- providing notice, at least 24 hours, to the ESW if you are unable to attend an assigned session, or if there is a change or cancellation to lectures or tutorials.
- being prepared for the sessions you arrange. For example: advise your ESW of the topic you need to review, read relevant material in advance, prepare questions, arrive on time, make notes.
- giving constructive feedback to the ESW. If you have a difficulty, first discuss this with the ESW. If there is a problem that you cannot resolve between you, contact the Disability Officer to arrange a meeting.

## **Subject-Specific Support**

DSS can only approve subject-specific support in cases where a student is prevented by reason of their disability from attending and benefiting equally from his/her core lectures or class tutorials. For example, students who are deaf or severely hard of hearing are fundamentally disadvantaged in a lecture setting. Students with mental health conditions or significant on-going illness may be occasionally absent due to their disabilities. Subject-specific support may be put in place to recap on lecture materials.

The Disability Support Service is obliged by the terms of ESF funding to ensure that subject-specific support is essential to ensure equity of participation, and does not grant students an unfair advantage over their peers.

Students may be asked to provide a medical certificate before subject-specific support can be provided.

## **Personal Assistants**

Students who need assistance with personal care, meals or accessing buildings may be granted a Personal Assistant (PA). A PA may also act as a note-taker, library and/or laboratory assistant.

A PA may be provided for the term time hours the student is attending the college, and if applicable, time spent commuting to and from college. Typical college hours are Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm during term-time only.

Students are encouraged to maintain a professional working relationship with their PA. PAs are allocated to assist students with personal care and academic work while they are on campus. Students are encouraged to manage the use of a PA's time constructively and efficiently.

A PA may be asked to:

- locate/print/scan selected texts on a reading list, while a student is completing course work in the library.
- print and/or bind a student's written assignment from a USB.
- print course materials from Moodle and to organise them into folders/dividers.
- dictate a text onto audio file.
- submit/return forms to academic/administrative offices on behalf of a student.
- scribe for a student who is writing an assignment, report or email.

A PA should NOT be asked to:

- assist a student off-campus in an activity unrelated to their course
- carry out work on a student's behalf while a student is not also on campus.
- provide feedback on discipline-specific vocabulary, argumentation or referencing.
- proof-read; students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their own written work.

Students should sign-off on their PA's weekly timesheet to confirm the hours of work that the PA has completed. Students should never sign PA timesheets in advance. Timesheets must be a true and accurate account of the hours of work that have been carried out by a PA.

Students must contact the Disability Officer for advance approval of any PA hours outside of normal college hours (i.e. after 6pm or weekends). Requests for the use of PA support may only be granted for attendance at lecturers, seminars or conferences that are a compulsory component of your course.

## **Disability Support Service Complaints Procedure**

In the event that you are dissatisfied with our service, please contact the Disability Officer in the first instance. She will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the issue and try to reach a resolution.

If your complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction, the College has a Disability Service Complaints Procedure.