

## **Royal Academy of Dramatic Art**

### **Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure**

#### **What are 'Reasonable Adjustments' for students with disabilities with disabilities?**

Under the Equality Act 2010 (previously the Disability Discrimination Act), discrimination against people with disabilities can take place in either of two ways by:

- a. treating them less favourably than other people, or,
- b. failing to make reasonable adjustments when they are placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other people for a reason relating to their disability.

Institutions are only expected to do what is reasonable. This will depend on individual circumstances, and on financial and other resources available. Health and safety issues and the interests of other people may be relevant here although this not likely to be the case. Many reasonable adjustments are free or low cost.

Under the Act, higher education institutions also have an anticipatory duty to provide reasonable adjustments for applicants and students with disabilities. This means that in addition to providing individual reasonable adjustments for specific requirements, RADA must plan ahead and take a strategic approach to addressing and removing the barriers that potentially impede the progress of students with disabilities.

An example of an individual reasonable adjustment is providing a technical theatre student who has a hearing impairment with a professional quality dual muff headset so that they can hear the cues (most students use just one earpiece). An example of an anticipatory adjustment is providing all written materials for the course in advance (including play-scripts and poems) by email or intranet, so that all students can prepare for the session, including those with hearing or visual impairments and those with specific learning difficulties.

Where the term 'reasonable adjustment' is used alone in this policy, it refers to both individual and anticipatory adjustments.

#### **Who is covered by the term 'students with disabilities'?**

Under the Equality Act a person had a disability if they have:

- a. an impairment which has an adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities;
- b. the adverse effect is substantial;
- c. the adverse effect is long-term. This means that it has lasted for 12 months, is likely to last for more than 12 months, or for the rest of a life or (particularly in the case of conditions such as mental health difficulties and ME) is likely to reoccur.

The term 'person with a disability' can include those with the following conditions:

- a. Dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties
- b. Mental health difficulties
- c. 'hidden impairments' such as diabetes, asthma and sickle cell anaemia

- d. Visual impairments
- e. Hearing impairments
- f. Mobility difficulties
- g. Medical conditions including cancer and HIV/Aids from the point of diagnosis;
- h. Social and other communication and learning difficulties such as autism, Asperger syndrome and ADHD/ADD.

The meaning of the term 'student' is also very wide and includes postgraduates and undergraduates, home and overseas students, those on short courses (including fully fee paying courses), those visiting from other institutions, applicants and those attending interview and audition. This policy focuses on RADA students who are applying for or attending our higher education programmes and the Foundation Course in Acting. There is a separate policy covering all short course or outreach courses.

### **What is the Social Model of Disability?**

RADA uses the Social Model of Disability and this is the perspective that helps the Academy to form its policy and procedures on reasonable adjustments. The 'Social Model' takes the view that society creates barriers that 'disable' people from participating fully and on an equal basis with others and that wherever possible, these barriers ought to be removed. RADA has a commitment to identifying and removing the barriers students with disabilities might face in their training and to providing appropriate support through making reasonable adjustments (and other strategies where appropriate) so that all students can achieve their full potential.

An approach where staff take responsibility for identifying and removing potential barriers, takes the emphasis away from the more negative 'medical model' focus of what people with disabilities cannot do and puts the emphasis on what people with disabilities can achieve with appropriate support.

### **What is 'reasonable'? Maintaining academic and other standards and identifying the 'core elements' of the training:**

The purpose of the legislation on reasonable adjustments is to enable disabled people to gain access to learning opportunities that are available to their peers and would otherwise be denied to them. It is not expected that academic, artistic and other relevant learning standards should be lowered or compromised.

To achieve this, course leaders and course developers need to be precise on what is and what is not a **core element** of a programme so that they can assess what is just a traditional, 'tried and tested' method of teaching and what is an essential component of the course. This will help to see where appropriate individual or anticipatory adjustments can be made.

### **Under the reasonable adjustments policy, who has responsibility for developing and implementing adjustments?**

Individual reasonable adjustments are usually developed by the Course Leader/Director and/or the Head of Student Wellbeing and written in a **Learning Agreement**. The disabled student should always be a key part of developing and modifying their Learning Agreement.

### **Confidentiality and disclosure of information:**

Students have the right to choose not to disclose information about their condition or impairment or to disclose information to particular members of staff and ask for this to be

kept confidential to others. Students need to understand that although they have the right not to disclose information, it may limit the possibility of making reasonable adjustments (although RADA still has the responsibility to make anticipatory adjustments). The Data Protection Act considers information about disability to be confidential information and staff need to take great care not to pass information on to students or to other members of staff who might not have been included in the Learning Agreement which outlines the agreed adjustments.

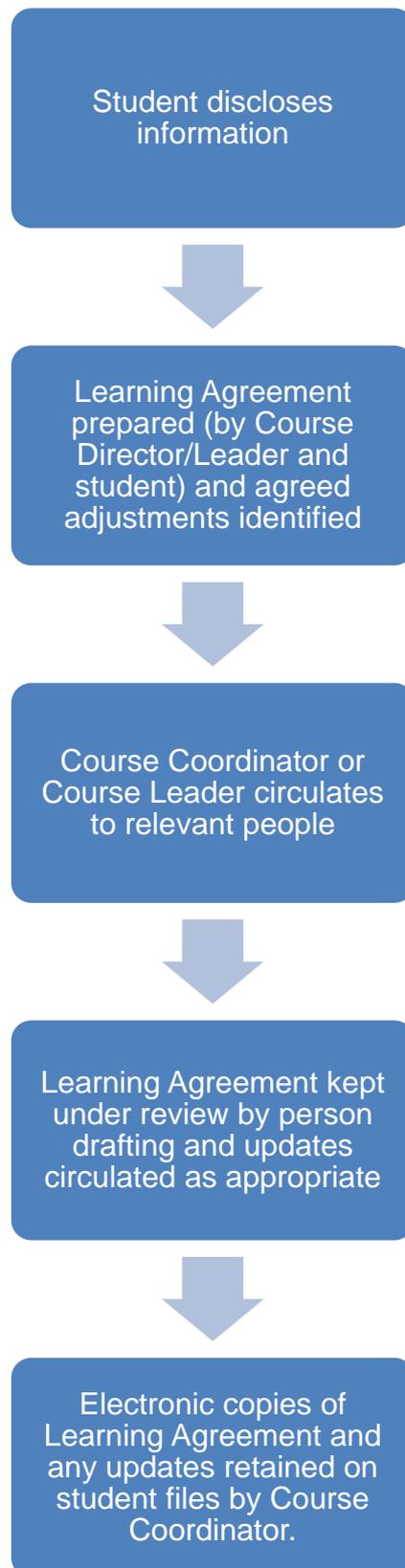
Students should be involved in drawing up a list of reasonable adjustments and they have the right to say who should see this information. The names of staff who will see the agreement (either individually or by role) should be listed on the Learning Agreement which needs to be signed by the student and the Course Leader or Head of Student Wellbeing. Staff need to accept that there are occasions when they will be asked to make and/or agree an adjustment without being given all the details of the student's disability, medical or mental health condition.

For more information on this, see RADA's Information and Advice on Developing Learning Agreements Factsheet and Sample Learning Agreement Template.

**All members of staff have the responsibility to:**

- a. make sure that they read all Learning Agreements that are sent to them and keep up to date with any changes or developments;
- b. take a proactive approach to finding out about reasonable adjustments that they have responsibility for implementing;
- c. remember to implement the reasonable adjustments that have been approved and decided, not on a 'one-off' basis but throughout the course;
- d. take steps to see where, in their own teaching or work, an adjustment (both anticipatory and individual) might help a student to make progress and achieve their potential;
- e. have a sensitive and respectful approach to discussing adjustments with the student concerned;
- f. respect confidentiality of information both within the classroom/studio/workshop and in the Academy;
- g. discuss any problems or successes with the Course Director/Leader or Head of Student Wellbeing.

**Record management and process:**



## CASE STUDIES

### *What is a 'core element' of the course?*

An acting student has a hearing impairment. She uses both speech and British Sign Language. She has never sung before and is nervous about this aspect of the training. This is discussed by the Head of Course and the Principal before the module starts and it is decided that singing is not a 'core element' of acting training and the student could still pass the course without studying this component. However she is very reluctant to miss out on singing training and after some discussion, the following reasonable adjustments are agreed: lessons are arranged in an echo free room, she has extra time with a support worker who plays the piano and the singing tutor selected has experience of working with people with hearing impairments. This proves to be very successful and she performs her song at the end of term with other students. She passes the course and her teachers note that it has a positive, long term impact on her voice, posture and confidence.

### *Confidentiality and disclosure: who needs to know what?*

A student has a long term medical condition and one aspect of this is that they have can difficulties with bladder control. This information is shared with the Course Leader but understandably, the student does not want it discussed with other staff or students. The agreed adjustment is for the student to be able to leave class when necessary, without asking permission. Teaching staff are asked to respect that this adjustment has been approved by senior staff and they do not have the right to know more about why it has been agreed.

### *Adjustments at audition:*

Deputy Registrar is contacted by a dyslexic applicant who is concerned that his impairment might be a disadvantage at the final audition, following an experience at another institution. The Admissions Officer raises this with the Panel and then informs the tutor leading the applicant's workshop group, asking for a copy of the scene in case it is decided the applicant will benefit from seeing it the night before. The applicant is invited to come in early and chat with a panel member not involved in his audition to help contextualise the process. Given the choice, the applicant decides that he did not wish to see the audition piece in advance and would be fine with the half an hour allocated preparation time given to all students during the audition workshop.

*Learning Agreement updates:*

A student has a diagnosis of a bipolar disorder which is treated with medication and has had some difficult times before coming to study at RADA, including a period of homelessness. The student disclosed information about a mental health difficulty on her application form without giving any details. She is keen to make a 'new start', has told only one member of staff about her previous experiences and does not want other staff to know. It is agreed that she will start the course without any formal learning agreement. The only adjustments the student has asked for are brief, regular 'check-ins' with the Head of Student Wellbeing and to be able to come in later when she has to adjust to new medication. When this happens, relevant teaching staff are told that the student has permission to arrive late to class for an agreed period of time.

**Part 2. Short term adjustments for students with a physical, medical or emotional condition that is likely to be temporary**

Policy and procedure for **short term adjustments** apply to a student who has a physical, medical or emotional difficulty that is likely to be **temporary**.

A short term adjustment is not a legal entitlement as is the case for students with disabilities but it is good practice, enabling a student to continue their training during a period of adjustment and/or recovery.

There is a separate form to use in these cases: The Short Term Adjustments Form. The procedure for drawing up agreed reasonable adjustments is similar to that for students with disabilities and staff should read Part 1 of this policy to familiarise themselves with their responsibilities and for information about confidentiality. All information about a student's health and wellbeing is considered personal information (whether or not they can be described as 'students with disabilities') and due regard needs to be paid to confidentiality of information.

**Some examples of situations where 'short term adjustments' would be beneficial and appropriate support:**

A student who has recently had a bereavement is experiencing a period of anxiety and depression. He is seeing his GP and RADA's counsellor and taking medication. It is agreed that he can have time off so that he can spend some long weekends with his family and when he needs to attend medical appointments. He has brief, weekly meetings with his Course Director to check in and see how things are going. A Short Term Adjustments Form is sent to all his teachers, explaining the situation and asking them to show understanding for the next few weeks.

A student breaks her ankle during training. She is in plaster and can walk with difficulty. The doctors have advised her that she will need to use crutches for six weeks, followed by a period of regular physiotherapy. Her Short Term Adjustments Form gives teaching staff this information and says she will inform staff when she will be absent to attend medical appointments. As a TTSM student, on a Scenic Art rotation, she is given a project to work on which can be done without having to work at height or use ladders. She is allowed to use the lift during this period of recovery.

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