

# Information for students with a disability

University of Cambridge  
HEFCE Disability Statement 2000

Including information for students with chronic illness, dyslexia, sensory disabilities, mobility difficulties and mental health difficulties

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This information is available on request in Braille, large print, audio-tape, in electronic format, and at <http://www.cam.ac.uk/>

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## 1. Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor

Everyone who has the capability to benefit from studying at Cambridge should have the opportunity to do so: this is the principle which informs our approach to widening participation in a range of areas, including disability. With this principle in mind, in 1999 we successfully applied for funding from HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council in England) to improve our disability provision. Using this money we have established a Disability Resource Centre to serve as a central focus for support. We are also improving support for students with dyslexia, the largest disability group in the University. Underpinning these moves is an expanded programme of disability awareness training for all levels of staff and students, since we believe that supportive attitudes are crucial to ensuring that people with a disability flourish in the University.

A driving force for change in the University has been the Advisory Committee on Disability, founded in 1992. This Committee has representatives from a wide range of bodies, including Colleges, departments, Estates Management, the Students' Union and the InterCollegiate Admissions Office. Undergraduates, graduates and staff with a disability are represented on the Committee. The University Disability Adviser, in post since 1995, sits on the Committee and is responsible for ensuring its decisions are implemented. She manages the day-to-day support for students and staff with a disability.

The Committee monitors applications and offers made to students with a disability, and collects statistics on the numbers of students with a disability in the University each year. The statistics for the year 1999-2000 are as follows, including both graduates and undergraduates who declared a disability:

Dyslexia	93
Blind / Partially sighted	23
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	24
Mental Health	8
Wheelchair User / Mobility Difficulties	23
Unseen e.g. Asthma or Diabetes	299
Multiple Disabilities	12
Unspecified	165
<b>Total</b>	<b>647</b>

The total student population, graduate and undergraduate, for 1999-2000 was 16,314

It is difficult to give a general picture of the accessibility of the University because there is such a range in the age of our buildings - from 13<sup>th</sup> century Colleges to 21<sup>st</sup> century departments. It is best to consult the Access Guide for a more detailed picture. However, amongst the 31 Colleges, 22 have specially adapted rooms for wheelchair users. Many have experience of accommodating students with hearing loss or who are visually impaired. If a College offers you a place, it will make every effort to make the adaptations you require because of your disability.

The University of Cambridge is committed to widening access to its world-class facilities: if after reading this guide you would like further information, please contact the University Disability Adviser (contact details are on the cover page).

## **2. Your application**

### ***Our admissions policy***

The Colleges welcome applications from people with a disability. You are welcome to contact the University Disability Adviser at any stage of your application for advice and information.

There is a Special Access Scheme for people who feel that their education has been substantially disrupted because of their health or disability. You are guaranteed an interview if you apply through this scheme, provided that you otherwise satisfy entry requirements for the particular course you are studying (for example, you are studying the required A-levels)<sup>1</sup>. The form for the Scheme is available from the Cambridge InterCollegiate Applications Office (address below).

There is at the time of writing no question regarding disability on the Cambridge Preliminary Application Form (PAF), although Colleges will be aware that you have a disability if you indicate this on the UCAS form. If you are called to interview it is important to let the College know in good time whether your disability means that you need special arrangements, so that the College can ensure these are in place.

From 2001, Colleges will contact every undergraduate applicant with a disability who is made an offer in order to clarify support needs.

If you wish to pursue graduate study, please inform the Board of Graduate Studies when you apply if you have any disability or health condition that may require particular facilities. You are strongly encouraged also to contact the University Disability Adviser when making your application for admission.

### ***Where to get advice on your application***

Your first step should be to read the undergraduate prospectus, available through your school or FE College, or directly from:

Cambridge InterCollegiate Applications Office  
Kellet Lodge,  
Tennis Court Road  
Cambridge University CB2 1QF  
Telephone 01223 333308

You can obtain general advice from the Applications Office, or from individual Colleges (contact details are in the Prospectus).

Those wishing to pursue graduate study may obtain a copy of the Graduate Studies prospectus from:

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<sup>1</sup> The scheme applies to home applicants to undergraduate courses only.

The Board of Graduate Studies  
4 Mill Lane  
Cambridge CB2 1RZ  
Telephone 01223 766302  
E-mail: admissions@gradstudies.cam.ac.uk

For advice on issues arising from your disability, contact the University Disability Adviser. She can give you information on the accessibility of particular Colleges, the facilities available at the University, and she can put you in touch with students already at the University with your particular disability. Once it is clear which Colleges you might be interested in, do contact their Admissions Office directly for further information.

The prospectus lists College and Department Open Days. However, if you feel that because of your disability, you would prefer to make an individual visit, the Disability Adviser can arrange this for you. She can also arrange for a sign-language interpreter during your visit, funded by the University. Since there is a national shortage of interpreters, plenty of notice must be given if you require this service.

### **3. Facilities and equipment: general information**

#### ***IT equipment***

The expectation is generally that students will apply for the Disabled Students Allowance to enable them to buy their own equipment. The University maintains a small pool of loan equipment to tide people over until they have their own equipment, and also for the use of students not eligible for DSA (such as overseas students).

The equipment pool at present (July 2000) comprises:

1. Five PCs (one with modem; one with large screen; one with voice-activated software; one with Texthelp software)
2. 2 Portable tape-recorders
3. CCTV
4. Sennheiser Mikroport system
5. Laptop PC
6. Portable ramp (can cope with up to 600mm step height).
7. Braille printer

Students with a disability requiring equipment which cannot be funded through DSA are encouraged to apply to Access funds for support (see page 11).

#### ***Accommodation***

All undergraduates whose disability requires them to be housed in College will be offered College accommodation for the full duration of their undergraduate course. Many Colleges also provide some postgraduate accommodation, and postgraduates with a disability are given priority in the allocation of accommodation.

Colleges vary in their accessibility, but most have rooms accessible to wheelchair-users, and some are able to accommodate a carer. Guide dogs can be accommodated

in many Colleges. Rooms can be adapted where required to suit the needs of those with hearing loss. The University's Access Guide gives an overview of each College in terms of its accessibility; it is available on the University Website (<http://www.cam.ac.uk>), or by post from the Disability Adviser, who can also describe further the individual Colleges' facilities.

### ***Medical Facilities***

Every College has a College Nurse, who is available for consultation at fixed times throughout the term. All students are required to register with a Cambridge GP.

### ***No-smoking policy***

There is no University-wide policy on smoking in College or University buildings.

### ***Library facilities***

The University Library: The Library is wheelchair accessible through a side entrance, and there are lifts to every floor once inside. Staff are available to fetch books for readers where required. Undergraduates are not normally allowed to borrow books until their third year, but exceptions can be made for students with a disability. Extended borrowing arrangements are also possible.

Colleges and departments have their own libraries: for details of accessibility, see the Access Guide. Arrangements for extended borrowing and for book-fetching are also possible in these libraries.

### ***Student support***

The Disability Adviser maintains a file of people willing to provide academic support to students with a disability e.g. by note-taking, reading or assisting in libraries, and the Adviser helps students in finding assistants in the right subjects and with the right skills and in arranging for funding.

### ***Special diets***

Colleges will try to cater for special diets where necessary.

### ***Sports facilities***

Fenner's, the University's Physical Education Centre, is accessible to wheelchair users and has a fitness room with some equipment specifically designed for the use of people with disabilities.

## **4. Facilities and equipment: information for those with particular disabilities**

### ***Dyslexia***

At present the University, together with the Colleges, offers the following to people with dyslexia:

- A limited number of free pre-assessments for those who think they may have dyslexia, but have never had a formal diagnosis
- study skills sessions to help improve coping strategies
- the University Recording Service, to read texts on to tape
- advice and support on equipment and software purchase
- assistance where required in using libraries

See section 12 for details of further developments.

### ***Visual impairment***

The following is available for those with visual impairment:

- The city's Social Services Visual Impairment team offers orientation to students when they first arrive, and Colleges can also assign fellow students to assist in finding your way around.
- The University Library has a scanner system which can read text aloud via a voice synthesiser, convert it into Braille, or store it on disk for use on students' own equipment. It is also equipped with CCTVs.
- The Disability Adviser can recruit personal readers for students, and students can also make use of the University recording service, which reads texts on to audio-tape.
- Guide Dogs are welcome: many Colleges are able to assign a room giving easy access to a garden.

### ***Hearing loss***

- There is a Sennheiser radio-aid available for loan, and there are plans to increase the number of radio-aids available.
- At present a small number of University lecture theatres are equipped with induction loops; however, policy is to install loops in response to the needs of particular students or members of staff.
- There is a textphone in the Disability Resource Centre.
- Colleges can adapt rooms to the needs of students with hearing loss, for example by fitting a flashing door-bell and fire alarm.
- The Disability Adviser can recruit note-takers for students. She can arrange to recruit interpreters and lipspeakers through the RNID office, but students should note that there is a national shortage of sign-language interpreters so it may be difficult to cover an entire lecture programme in some subjects.

### ***Mobility difficulties (including wheelchair users)***

If on studying the Access Guide, you find the department or College in which you are interested does not appear to be accessible, contact the Disability Adviser for further information. Wherever practicable the University will endeavour to enable access to buildings, given reasonable notice.

Students with mobility difficulties (or other conditions affecting ability to travel, such as M.E.) will be given permission to bring a car to Cambridge. They will be allocated a parking space at College and also a permit for parking at the department (where possible, in both cases).

### ***Mental health difficulties***

The University Counselling Service supports students experiencing anxiety, stress and depression. If you have an existing mental health difficulty you are encouraged to inform your Cambridge GP to ensure appropriate long-term support while you are studying.

## **5. Accessibility**

### ***The Access Guide***

The University Access Guide is intended to give an overview of accessibility to guide you in short-listing Colleges you wish to consider. For more detailed information, contact either the College Admissions Office or the Disability Adviser.

### ***Inaccessible buildings***

At present University policy is to carry out adaptations in response to the needs of individual students or members of staff - so do not dismiss a department or College you are interested in if it appears to be inaccessible. It may be possible to make alterations to accommodate you, so it is important to ask whether this could be done. The University will inform you as soon as possible, if alterations would not be practicable, or possible in the time-frame envisaged.

### ***Travel in and around Cambridge***

Cambridge is a small and compact city, and from this point of view it is well suited to the needs of those with mobility problems or visual impairment. The town is flat, and the centre is pedestrianised from 10am - 4pm Monday to Saturday. (This can however cause problems for those who need to use a car to get from College to department).

Public transport in Cambridge is as follows:

- Coach: there is a coach station in the middle of town (close to Emmanuel college).
- Bus: services do not visit many of the University sites. There is a bus-pass scheme providing free travel for blind / partially sighted people and half price travel for those with mobility difficulties; contact 44 St. Andrews Street, Cambridge, Tel. 01223 358977
- Train: the railway station is about a mile from the centre of town. You can then take a bus or taxi into the centre.



- Taxi: there is a taxi-card scheme operated by Cambridge City Council for wheelchair users, those registered blind / partially sighted, and those receiving mobility allowance, attendance allowance or the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance. Contact Jane Richardson on 01223 467000.

### ***Accessibility of the city***

There is a Guide to the City which includes assessment of accessibility. It is published by Adhoc Publishing; the Website address is [www.adhoc-guides.com](http://www.adhoc-guides.com)

## **6. Personal Care**

Bridget's is a hostel providing 24-hour care as well as accessible accommodation to people studying in Cambridge. It is centrally located and provides transport for residents. For those who wish to live in College, the Bridget's Support Scheme is available whereby carers are provided either to an agreed timetable or to live in with a student. Care packages are designed for the individual; further information available from the Manager, Bridget's, Tennis Court Road, Cambridge CB2 1QF.

## **7. Special accommodation**

Special accommodation is available either at Bridget's (see above) or in adapted rooms within many of the Colleges (see the Access Guide for details). The facilities available in adapted accommodation will vary from College to College, but most will be ensuite. Some Colleges can also accommodate a carer.

## **8. Sources of help while you are studying**

There is a high level of support available for individual students at Cambridge. For general welfare issues, the first person to approach is your personal Tutor. For issues relating to academic work, undergraduates should approach their Director of Studies, and graduates should approach their Supervisor. These people will help in explaining your particular needs to individual supervisors and lecturers responsible for teaching you. They can be supported in this by the University Disability Adviser. The Disability Resource Centre runs regular disability awareness training sessions, open to all staff, and disability awareness is included in induction programmes for new staff.

Other sources of help within the University are:

- The University Disability Adviser: offers support, advice and information throughout your time at Cambridge. A termly newsletter keeps you in touch with what is happening within the University and with national disability news.
- Cambridge University Students Union: offers support, information and advice to undergraduates. CUSU has a Welfare officer and a Disability officer.
- The Graduate Union: offers support, information and advice to graduate students.
- The Careers Service: has a wealth of information on career opportunities. Its Careers Advisers offer individual guidance sessions. There is a careers adviser with special responsibility for students with a disability.

- The University Counselling Service: offers a confidential counselling service to students.
- Local organisations: a comprehensive list of local support groups is available in the Directions Plus handbook, which is available on the Website: [www.directions-plus.org](http://www.directions-plus.org)

## **9. Special arrangements for teaching and examination**

### ***Teaching***

Much of the University's undergraduate and graduate teaching is carried out in small groups, which means that the special requirements of individuals can be taken into account. In classes and lectures, where possible hand-outs can be provided in large print.

### ***Examination***

The University takes a flexible approach to special arrangements for examinations and tailors such arrangements as far as possible to the particular requirements of the individual student. Examples of arrangements are; use of an amanuensis or word-processor; extra time; rescheduling of the examination timetable so that you take no more than one examination a day. There is also provision for special marking: examiners are made aware of students with dyslexia and invited not to penalise the student for minor errors or grammar or spelling. Where necessary, special arrangements are made for colour-blind students taking practical examinations.

Your College Tutor is responsible for requesting special examination arrangements for you.

## **10. Financial Support**

The following are the major sources of financial support for students with a disability:

### ***The Disabled Students Allowance***

If you face extra costs on your course because you are disabled you may be eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance. This allowance is not means-tested, and can cover the cost of a non-medical personal helper (e.g. note-taker; reader; sign-language interpreter), major items of specialist equipment (such as a CCTV; computer with specialist software) and other expenditure, such as for audio-tapes or Braille paper.

Undergraduates should apply to your Local Education Authority, preferably during the summer before you come up to Cambridge. You will need to provide evidence of your disability (e.g. a dyslexia assessment or doctor's letter) and you may be asked to go for a needs assessment to establish the kind of equipment which would benefit you.

Graduate students who are funded by a Research Council also have access to Disabled Students Allowances. You should contact your Research Council for details. Links to their Websites can be found at: <http://www.research-councils.ac.uk>.

At present (July 2000) there are new proposals to provide up to £5,000 for disability-related expenditure to postgraduates who are not funded by a Research Council: contact the University Disability Adviser for further details.

### ***Access Funds***

These are hardship funds managed by the central University administration. You can apply for Access Funds once you are a student at Cambridge, if you are a home student (i.e. not an EU or overseas student). Students with a disability are given a high priority in the allocation of funds.

### ***College funds***

Most Colleges have hardship funds: ask your College tutor for further information.

### ***Bridget's Trust***

Both funds described below are for the support of students with a disability in Cambridge where statutory funds are not available.

The Elsie Widdowson Bursary Fund: preference is given to women and to residents at Bridget's, but men and any student with a disability may apply. Funds are available for any purpose connected with the student's course of study, including for example books, materials and equipment, travel or care and accommodation costs while in Cambridge.

Bridget's Last Resort Fund: as the name suggests, this fund aims to help those with a disability who have exhausted all other sources of support. Trustees favour applications for disability-related expenditure.

## **11. Monitoring provision**

The University Advisory Committee on Disability has overall responsibility for monitoring support for students (and staff) with a disability throughout the University. Student representatives sit on this Committee, and so does the University Disability Adviser. If you have any comments about provision (including suggestions for improvement or for new services!) you should contact the Disability Adviser.

A Student Complaints procedure is presently being drafted.

## **12. Future Developments**

In 1999 the University successfully applied for funding from HEFCE (the Higher education Funding Council for England) to improve its provision for students with a disability. The funding will last for three years and will support developments in the following areas:

- Disability Resource Centre: providing a focal point for disability support, advice and information in the University. Facilities planned are: equipment and software on display; space for self-help groups to meet; opportunities to browse through material

on disabilities, information on provisions within the University and city wide, and recent journals from organisations with an interest in disability issues.

- Dyslexia: recruitment of a Dyslexia Support Co-ordinator to develop and run a system of specialist support for students with dyslexia to include a pre-screening service, in-house study skills sessions and advice on technical aids and equipment.
- Disability Awareness Training: expansion of the present programme to cover a wider range of staff and to include students.

### **13. Contact name**

*At the time of writing, the University is in the process of appointing a new Disability Adviser.*

University Disability Adviser  
Disability Resource Centre,  
DAMTP,  
Silver Street,  
Cambridge  
CB3 9EW

Telephone 01223 332301  
Textphone 01223 766840  
E-mail [ucam-disability@lists.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ucam-disability@lists.cam.ac.uk)

### **14. Disclaimer**

While the University will make every reasonable effort to provide the services set out in this statement, and to help you to make best use of them, budgetary and other resource constraints make it impossible to guarantee that all services will be available to all students without restriction.

## Appendix: further sources of information

I. Access Guide 1998 - 2000: available on the University Website, <http://www.cam.ac.uk>. A hard copy is available from the University Disability Adviser. (The 2000 - 2002 version is presently in preparation).

II. Guidance Notes: available on the University Website, <http://www.cam.ac.uk>. A hard copy is available from the University Disability Adviser.

- No. 1: Students with Chronic Illness/Unseen Disability
- No. 2: Students with Dyslexia
- No. 3: Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing Students
- No. 4: Blind and Partially Sighted Students
- No. 5: Students with Physical Disability

### III. Useful Websites

Cando Website at <http://cando.lancs.ac.uk/>

- Specialised careers information for disabled university students
- University Disability Statements

Skill (National bureau for students with disabilities) at <http://www.skill.org.uk/>

- News and information on life as a student with a disability

### IV. Local Support Organisations

*A selection is listed below: further details may be found at [www.directions-plus.org](http://www.directions-plus.org)*

- RNID Cambridge Branch  
8 Romsey Terrace, Cambridge, CB1 3NH  
Telephone 01223 245505 (textphone 245500)
- Cambridgeshire Deaf Association  
8 Romsey Terrace, Cambridge, CB1 3NH  
Telephone 01223 246237 (minicom 411801)
- CAMTAD  
(Campaign for tackling acquired deafness)  
Buchan House, Buchan Street, Cambridge, CB4 2XF,  
Telephone 01223 460616
- CAMSIGHT  
Support for visually impaired people.  
167 Green End Road, Cambridge, CB4 1RN, Telephone 01223 420033
- CAMREAD  
Reading service for visually impaired people.  
167 Green End Road, Cambridge, CB4 1RN, Telephone 01223 424220
- ME Association Cambridge Group  
4 Youngman Avenue, Histon, Cambridge CB4 4HP, Telephone 01223 233326

- Cambridge Dial-a-Ride Ltd.  
For those who cannot use conventional public transport due to their disability.  
Zion Baptist Church, 1 East Road, CB1 1BD, Telephone 01223 506335
- Lifecraft  
Drop-in centre and information service about mental health problems, treatments and local resources.  
The Bath House, Gwydir Street, Cambridge, CB1 2LW, Telephone: 01223 505932