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1	Approved	Craig Dewis	OCA Board	7 June 2022	June 2024

Open College of the Arts (OCA)

Student Accessibility Policy

1. The purpose of the policy

- 1.1 The Open College of the Arts (OCA) places accessibility, in its broadest sense, at the heart of what we do. OCA pursues a policy of open access to courses, and as such we are committed to making arts education accessible from course materials to learning design. This policy sets out our approach to accessibility, how we design our curriculum to be accessible, and how we go about making adjustments for those who have specific needs.

2. Who does the policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all applicants and students on OCA short and foundation courses, and undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. It applies to anyone with specific accessibility needs and how these interact with their studies. This includes applicants and students with disabilities and those with long-term physical and mental health conditions.
- 2.2 This policy, whilst discussing our approach to accessibility in general terms, does not specifically cover students studying in secure learning environments.

3. Linked and other relevant policies and legislation

- 3.1 This policy is subject to OCA's [Terms and Conditions](#).
- 3.2 This policy should be read in conjunction with other OCA policies, namely [Admissions Policy](#), [Assessment Policy](#), [Fitness to Study Policy](#), [Safeguarding Policy](#), [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Academic Regulatory Framework](#), [Common Credit Framework](#), and [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#).
- 3.2 This policy references the [Equality Act 2010](#), [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), and the [Public Sector Bodies \(Website and Mobile Applications\) \(No.2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#).

4. General principles

- 4.1 OCA anticipatory duties include work to embed accessibility into the curriculum design and delivery as a whole, from website presentation to learning design, in providing an inclusive learning environment that benefits all students. OCA also anticipates the needs of students with specific access requirements, with a range of reasonable adjustments that we can make as standard and supportive procedures to explore further specialist support. This is an iterative process and therefore OCA works with OCA accessibility student representatives

and student body to continuously review and improve the accessibility of the student experience and to meet accessibility standards.

- 4.2 The OCA aim is to help all students, regardless of background, to achieve success as defined by each individual. This involves proactively identifying, and then removing barriers to successful engagement.
- 4.3 As an inclusive environment, accessibility is a standing item on OCA groups and formal structures, and integrated into the learning design process. Our ethos is to develop accessibility from the ground up rather than as an add on. We aim to meet the highest accessibility standards and provide materials in multiple formats to help meet student needs.
- 4.4 Where students/applicants require additional adjustments to be made to meet their needs, OCA will treat them with fairness and respect, in exploring the best available solution to meeting their accessibility needs.
- 4.5 We encourage all applicants and students to discuss with OCA their specific learning needs as early as possible so that we may best support you in identifying solutions to your accessibility needs.
- 4.6 Accessibility means that we can make changes to the course content, the way in which it is delivered, and assessed. What we cannot change are the learning outcomes for each course unit, which is what your work will be judged against.
- 4.7 OCA makes provision under this policy to meet our obligations under the [Equality Act 2010](#). Specifically this is to make reasonable adjustments for people with specific accessibility needs. This can be a disability, long term health condition, or other accessibility needs.
- 4.8 Where students/applicants learning adjustments are needed we will aim to provide your preferred support needs, however on occasion this may not be possible. Where it is not possible to provide you with your preferred adjustment we will explain why and attempt to source a suitable alternative.

5. Accessible Learning - Curriculum Design

- 5.1 At OCA, our learning materials are designed to be as fully accessible as possible and compliant with accessibility legislation.
- 5.2 We integrate accessibility into learning design with our courses designed from the ground up to be accessible, and accessibility a key component of our quality assurance processes, with each course checked in commissioning, and before the course is released that it meets required accessibility standards. This is so students can be assured that the material and courses they receive meet accessibility standards.
- 5.3 To ensure that we embed accessibility as a core principle at OCA, accessibility is a standing item on OCAs Curriculum Design Group and Curriculum and Quality Committee. This makes accessibility a key consideration in the learning design, course commissioning, and quality assurance procedures.

- 5.4 For each course unit, OCA produces a Unit Accessibility Statement which is a detailed consideration of the course, the formats it is delivered in, how tutorials and group sessions are delivered, what to expect from assignments or projects, and other related accessibility information. These key statements will help students to make informed decisions about their learning journey, and enable OCA to assist in making reasonable adjustments where needed. Each Unit Accessibility Statement is available within the individual units on the specific [degree course pages](#) information on OCA's website.
- 5.5 OCA course materials are primarily hosted and accessed through our virtual learning environment, OCA Learn. This delivers OCA course materials with the availability of multiple formats including audio and visual content, interactive learning materials. In addition, through OCA Learn students can access all file-based content in Ebook (MOBI or ePub formats for viewing through screen readers/kindle and so on); mp3 Audio; electronic braille, and [DAISY \(a Digital Talking Books standard\)](#) formats.

6. Reasonable Adjustments

- 6.1 OCA recognises that even with the anticipatory design activities that we utilise, there will be a need for some students/applicants to have adjustments made to better facilitate their access to the course.
- 6.2 Applicants and students are encouraged to inform OCA of any disabilities or accessibility needs where there is an impact on your ability to study at the point of application and unit enrolment. As part of the registration process you will be invited to provide this information and speak to our Learner Support Team before you begin your studies. After registration should you require additional support or have a change in circumstances you can tell us either by emailing learnersupport@oca.ac.uk or by completing our [Disability Support Form](#) in the Student Handbook. You are also asked about disabilities and long term health conditions as part of application and enrolment; this is for statutory reporting purposes to the Office for Students and Higher Education Statistics Agency.
- 6.3 Applicants and students do not necessarily need evidence in order to access support, but having that evidence will assist OCA staff in providing support and individual solutions. For certain reasonable adjustments we may require evidence, either through a Needs Assessment report, GP letters, medical diagnoses, or other evidence provided by a suitably qualified professional. Where this is required we will tell you.
- 6.4 Where possible, OCA recommends that applicants and students apply for [Disabled Student's Allowance \(DSA\)](#). DSA has access to lots of resources that help provide access to learning.
- 6.5 If you are applying for DSA, OCA recommends this be done before you start your course and to wait to start until that support has been put in place. If you wish to start studying before DSA is in place, please speak to Learner Support about what you will need to study by contacting learnersupport@oca.ac.uk.
- 6.6 Students can access support for their disabilities and accessibility needs through the Student Handbook on OCA Learn, including [OCA's Disability Support Form](#) which you can use to tell us about your support needs.

6.7 OCA can make a number of reasonable adjustments in place to support students with their studies. These are general adjustments including extra time and adjustments to the format of certain assignments and so on. OCA will put these in place following a request from you either through our [Disability Support Form](#) or if you contact the Learner Support team directly at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk:

- Printed course materials in differing font and font size, or on coloured paper,
- Electronic course materials available for use with assistive technology,
- Additional time for assignments subject to the overall study timeframes. This may be:-
 - Up to 3 months per unit for Foundations, Undergraduate and Personal Development study;
 - Up to 2 weeks per course for Short Courses;
 - Up to 2 weeks per course unit for Postgraduate study.
- Adjustments to the format of assignment tasks e.g. undertaking a presentation instead of an essay or group work,
- Adjustments to exercises and projects requiring access to primary sources,
- Adjustments to the format of tutorials or feedback,
- Recordings of tutorials.

6.8 Where you may require other reasonable adjustments in addition to anything outlined above, please speak to the Learner Support team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk who will be able to go through with you in detail how OCA can support you.

6.9 Where accessibility needs are particularly complex, these cases will need to go to OCA's Senior Management Team for approval.

6.10 Wherever students/applicants learning adjustments are needed we will aim to provide your preferred support needs, however on occasion this may not be possible. Where it is not possible to provide you with your preferred adjustment we will explain why and attempt to source a suitable alternative.

6.11 Details of reasonable adjustments requested and put in place will regularly be fed back and reported to OCA's Curriculum Development Group for consideration on how OCA can build these aspects into learning design.

7. Communications Accessibility

7.1 OCA recognises the importance of ensuring that all of our public facing information, particularly through the OCA website, is fully accessible and meets the required standards of the Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018; see our [Accessibility Statement](#) for details.

7.2 The OCA website, online learning environments, and other public facing media including any apps in use are designed and updated to meet the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1 AA standard](#).

- 7.3 In communicating with students we will provide proactive information in a timely manner, allowing students time to digest information.
- 7.4 We will utilise a number of communications channels and formats for messages to ensure that all students can access information in a way that is useful and engaging for them.
- 7.5 Where students have specific accessibility needs we will inform them of the provisions they can expect from OCA and how we will support them.

8. Support for the policy

- 8.1 Students should contact the Learner Support Team at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk or 01226 978618 to discuss reasonable adjustments at the earliest opportunity.

9. Control of the policy

- 9.1 This policy was authored by Lia Harness, Senior Learner Support Adviser, and Craig Dewis, Head of Student Services in consultation with OCA Staff and given approval through OCA Oversight Management Group in May 2022.

10. Reviewing the policy

- 10.1 OCA will work closely with the Student Association to gather student feedback on the outline of the policy, its intentions, the administration of the policy, and a review of all these points in practice. These will then be fed into the next review point for the policy.
- 10.2 If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then you should contact either the Learner Support team directly at learnersupport@oca.ac.uk, or if you are a student, you might also wish to raise these with the appropriate OCASA representative.