

DISABILITY STATEMENT

PREAMBLE

The Mary Ward Centre is committed to ensuring that all disabled people including those with learning difficulties are treated fairly. The Centre welcomes the DDA (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001). We are committed to making all reasonable adjustments to all aspects of the Centre to avoid substantial disadvantage to any disabled student, potential student, or user of the Centre. The Centre is committed to providing the same standard of service to all members of the public and undertakes not to treat a person less favourably than it would treat others for a reason related to possessing a disability. However there are physical limitations to accessing floors other than the ground floor and the Centre lacks sole function, specialised support staff. The Disability Statement is therefore conditioned by this fact.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The Mary Ward Centre welcomes applications from all students who have particular needs associated with a physical disability, a sensory disability, a learning disability or difficulty, or those who require additional support with basic skills such as literacy. The Centre considers each applicant's circumstances and provides to the best of its ability specific support where possible to assist students. This document outlines the facilities available at the Centre and the Centre's approach to meeting the needs of all its students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE'S POLICIES

The Centre's Equality Assurance Policy states

- "The Mary Ward Centre is committed to providing an adult education service which offers equality of opportunity. We believe that all people have a right to an adult education service which promotes social justice and is free from unfair discrimination on any grounds."
- We are committed to opposing any form of discrimination both in the delivery of our adult education service and in our recruitment and employment practices.
- Notwithstanding the constraints the building imposes on people with mobility problems, extending disabled access and increasing the use of the Centre by people with disabilities should be made a priority. Signers, interpreters and other support staff should be arranged to ensure our service is accessible to all.

- The Centre is committed to providing a quality service to all actual or potential students. It therefore follows that without equality it is not possible to achieve quality.
- The Centre aims to create an environment in which all students and staff feel comfortable and free from oppressive attitudes and surroundings.”

All staff have a responsibility for equality assurance. An Equality Assurance Committee has delegated responsibility from the Management Committee to monitor adherence and implementation.

Student Charter

The Centre Charter states under ‘special needs’

- “The Centre has no discrete programme solely for adults with physical, mental health or sensory disabilities.
- The Centre has an extensive programme for elderly learners.
- Any student with special requirements should telephone and ask for Ann-Marie King who will endeavour to ensure that all that can be done, will be done to enable you to study. Where possible support will be provided. This might include sign translators for the hearing impaired, allowing a friend/support worker to join the class free, allowing guide dogs etc.”

Health and Safety Policy

The Centre’s Health and Safety Policy states

“The Centre recognises the important connection between the implementation of equality assurance policies and the duties of management and employees under health and safety legislation. The degree of care which is reasonable in any circumstances will be proportionately greater where persons of more than usual vulnerability are concerned. This will be borne in mind where employees, students, or visitors have disabilities.

Where persons with disabilities use the Centre consideration will be given to any special requirements they may have, including access and toilet and washing facilities. Possible inability to note and or respond to emergency evacuation signals will be considered and appropriate arrangements made to ensure their safety.”

ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS

All applications for enrolment are handled on a first come first served basis. Students can expect their application to be handled efficiently and fairly.

Enrolment is possible by phone, fax, email or in person. The enrolment forms invite students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to give details and to

contact a named person, Ann-Marie King, if the student has any special requirement that they wish the Centre to take into account. Any information is collected in confidence and tutors are only informed if requested to do so by the student.

Examples taken from recent years of how the Centre endeavours to meet the needs of its students are as follows:-

Where students with mobility problems are faced with stairs, class venues are swapped to ensure that the room is on the ground floor or in a room only one flight of stairs away if the student can manage them. (Unfortunately this arrangement falls down with specialist subjects in specialised rooms viz painting and drawing, craft and computing, or when suitable accommodation has already been assigned to another activity requiring disabled access.)

Successfully lobbying Camden Council for disabled parking bays outside the Centre, and for the implementation of dropped pavements.

Purchasing large monitors and software to assist visually impaired students in computer classes.

Recording notes on tape for a student who was unable to write and taping texts for blind student in drama class.

Reducing class sizes to accommodate companions/helpers/guide dogs for students requiring them.

Ensuring portable induction loop is available for students with hearing loss and purchasing radio receiver/transmitter hearing aids.

Purchase of a wireless PA system for a tutor with voice box problems.

In short, our statement in the prospectus, “if you have any special requirements we will do our utmost to assist” is borne out in practice.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

The premises comprise two early Georgian three-storey houses plus basement and a three-storey rear addition. Access for wheelchair users and mobility impaired students is via a ramp to the side of the building. There is a lift to provide access to two higher floors and the basement. Architecture and practical problems exist which makes the provision of lift access to all floors and rooms an impossibility. As a Grade 2 listed building there are great restrictions on what we can do.

The Centre has a mixture of multipurpose classrooms and specialist rooms. There are two staircases: the Café side staircase with a right handrail, and the Reception side stairs with left handrail. For a detailed breakdown of facilities and access see Appendix 1.

SUPPORT

There is no designated educational welfare worker at the Centre. Additional learning support for help with study skills and written English is co-ordinated by a .5 lecturer in Basic and Key Skills and sessional learner support staff engaged. General support is provided on an individual basis by members of the Student Services Team. Learner support is primarily the responsibility of the class tutor in liaison with the Head of Department but where more structured learner support is required the Centre provides it. The class tutor seeks guidance as appropriate and if the student's needs cannot be met by the staff team, or the learning support worker, or additional support advice is sought from specialist agencies. If we cannot help we will refer you to other agencies who might be able to.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Centre has a written complaints procedure, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 2 to this statement.

Specific complaints relating to:-

- applications for admission to the Centre
- educational facilities and support, such as equipment and academic support
- physical access to facilities
- welfare

should be referred to Ann-Marie King in the first instance. Appeals, where applicable, will be referred to the Principal.

EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

Examinations have not traditionally been a feature of the Centre's work but take up is increasing. Where they are held on site, the venue will not be in an area that is less advantageous to a student with special needs than that which prevailed for their tuition (i.e. if a class was held on the ground floor the examination would not be on a higher floor, or if a sign interpreter was needed for the teaching and an oral component existed in the examination then a signer would be provided) Additional time will be sought for students with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

Where examinations are to be held off site at a venue determined by the examining body every effort would be made to ensure a student with special educational needs would not be at a disadvantage compared to an able bodied student.

WELFARE AND COUNSELLING ARRANGEMENTS

As already mentioned there is no designated welfare service or student counsellor service at the Centre. Where the expressed need is beyond the scope of the Centre's staff, referral is made to an appropriate external source. This is reiterated in the Centre's Student Charter.

FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

Courses which run at the Centre are mainly funded by the Learning & Skills Council. Some classes are funded by the University of London Birkbeck Centre for Extra Mural Studies. Fee remission is conditioned by the students' status which is determined by age, employment status, receipt of means tested benefit etc.

Where a student does not fit into prescribed categories and cannot afford fees the Centre has discretionary power to reduce fees.

The Centre has a policy that no person will be turned away on the grounds that they cannot afford the tuition fees.

The cost of additional support is borne by the Centre and may be recouped via the Learning and Skills Council

MONITORING

The Centre collects data from students on its enrolment form. Students are invited to indicate whether they have a disability or learning difficulty and to indicate any resulting special requirement they might have. Information so gathered is collated and informs Centre practice.

For 2005-2006 students responded in the following way.

	No. of students	percentage
Disabled	840	12.95
Not Disabled	5645	87.03
Declined to respond	1	0.02
Total students	6486	

NAMED PERSONS

Ann-Marie King is the person responsible for enquiries, admissions and dealing with special requirements of students with disabilities or learning difficulties.

Helen Cottingham, Head of Basic Skills & Languages, has responsibility for students with specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia) and assessing literacy needs.

Robert McIntosh, Co-ordinator Additional Learning Support, has responsibility for matching additional learner support workers to students and for monitoring and evaluation.

Heads of Department have responsibility for arranging other learner support specific to accessing the learning content of courses in partnership with the tutor of the course.

Facilities

Basement: Accessed from Reception or Café stairs. Steep flight with 17 stairs from Reception, 19 stairs from Cafe. Handrail. Also accessible via lift.

<u>Room No.</u>	<u>Room Use</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
B1	Crèche	
B3	Craft room	woodwork, framemaking, stained glass, jewellery
B3b	Gents' toilet	Urinal and 1 WC, not handrailed
B4	Multi-purpose/IT room with office chairs	1 Step down into room
B5	Open access learning centre	

Ground Floor: Disabled accessible to all parts. Entry from Old Gloucester Street. Electrically operated door at top of ramp. Light switches at low level.

1	Reception and back office	
2	Ladies toilet and separate disabled access toilet and fire exit Public telephone opposite Ladies toilet, wheelchair useable	
3	Disabled accessible multi-purpose room with induction loop (used as base for Over 60's work).	
3a	Small multi-purpose room with desk chairs and induction loop. Accessible from 3 if required	
3b	Vice Principal's office	
4&5	Café	
7	Sculpture Studio	

Half landing: Between ground floor and 1st floor mezzanine. Room 13 via flight of 6 stairs from half landing and 3 stairs into the room. Alternative fire escape route up ramp to Room 12. Also accessible via lift.

First Floor Two flights up from Reception. Risers shallow and treads have settled with age. All rooms accessible via lift and ramp from room 13.

11 Large multi-purpose room with easy chairs. 25 stairs from Reception.

12 Small multi-purpose room, originally a 'withdrawing' room from Room 11.

14 Large multi-purpose room (28 stairs up from Café)

15 Computer education

Half landing: Between 1st and 2nd floors, reached by 6 steps.

23 Art Studio

23a Multi-purpose classroom

These rooms are accessible via the lift.

Second Floor: Four flights from Reception (53 stairs)

21 Multi-purpose room. 1 step up from landing

22 Principal's office

22a Unisex toilets, 2 WCs

24 Multi-purpose classroom

25 Computer education

Third floor: 6 flights and 78 stairs from Reception

31 Art Studio

Half landing: To roof. 8 steps up from Computing office

37 Toilet, 1 WC with handrail

Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AQ 020 7269 6000

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Mary Ward Centre's prime concern is that any person dealing with the Centre should have an efficient, courteous and helpful encounter. Likewise any user of our services has a right to expect quality in that service and value for money.

A complaint would be defined as the sharing of a negative experience by a member of the public or user of the Centre's services which in their opinion was as a result of the Centre's failure to meet an expected level of efficiency, courtesy, helpfulness or quality.

The Centre takes complaints seriously and encourages its users to bring to the attention of its staff any instance of an unsatisfactory outcome or experience.

This complaints procedure confirms that any complaint will be treated with courtesy, impartiality and in confidence. Complaints can be made in person, in writing, by fax or by telephone. In 2008 we introduced a new additional complaints policy covering admissions to accredited courses, see below.

General Complaints Procedure

To whom do you complain?

We are committed to resolving complaints as quickly as possible.

Normally complaints should be raised on the spot at the point of delivery with any party concerned and be dealt with immediately. If this is not possible and you do not have a named person with whom you wish to raise the matter, the initial person to contact at the above address is the PA to the Principal: Tel 020 7269 6062, Fax 020 7269 6001, email ceri.williams@marywardcentre.ac.uk. If the complaint is about the Principal or her PA, please address complaints to the clerk, sarah-jane.stagg@marywardcentre.ac.uk.

1. Formal Procedure

- 1.1 If the complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the point where the cause of complaint occurred, then contact should be made directly with the PA to the Principal. Full details should be given in writing. It would be helpful if a daytime telephone number were given. If help

is needed in drafting a written complaint, also contact the Principal's PA who will give you assistance.

- 1.2 Once the complaint has been received you will receive an acknowledgement within seven working days excluding holidays.
- 1.3 If the complaint relates to admission to an accredited course, see procedure below in Section 2
- 1.4 The Principal's PA will have initial authority to investigate your complaint and will seek information from any other party concerned. In the first instance s/he will always inform and involve the relevant manager or Head of Department. On completion of the investigation and if the complaint is found reasonable, s/he will ensure that you receive a courteous apology and any redress that is required. Wherever possible the manager closest to the complaint will respond in the first instance and report directly to the complainant, copying in the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality. If your complaint is rejected you can expect the reasons why to be clearly stated. You will also receive a copy of the Complaints Procedure at this point.
- 1.5 If the response received to your complaint is in your opinion unsatisfactory you can request that the matter be passed to the Vice Principal – Curriculum and Quality for her/his consideration.
- 1.6 Likewise, any complaint received which is either more complex or raises more serious issues than can be appropriately dealt with by the Principal's PA, will also be forwarded to the Vice Principal for her/his investigation. The Vice Principal will seek information from all parties concerned and if necessary will seek further clarification from you.
- 1.7 You should expect a response within 21 working days not including holidays following receipt of an acknowledgement. If your complaint is upheld you will receive an apology or any redress due. If your complaint is rejected you can expect full reasons as to why. A copy of the response to you will be copied to the Principal.
- 1.8 If you still feel that the response to your complaint at this stage is not satisfactory you have the right to an appeal to the Principal. You should expect a response within 7 working days, not including holidays.

If you are not satisfied with the response from the Principal, you have the right to a final appeal to the Management Committee. This can be done in writing via the Chair of the Management Committee. The Management Committee has a standing Complaints/Disciplinary Committee comprising the Vice-Chair of the Management Committee, a student member and a staff member.

The Principal and Vice Principal are not members of this Standing Committee and will only appear if requested to provide information. The Standing Committee will act as an independent review body in order to ensure impartiality. In the event of one or more of its members being the subject of a complaint, or being seen to have had an involvement in earlier stages of the complaints procedure, then they will stand down and be replaced by another member or other members of the Management Committee.

The Chair of Mary Ward Centre will be informed immediately an appeal to the Standing Committee is made. This Standing Committee should meet within 15 working days, excluding holidays, of your request and its decision will be final. It will be provided with all correspondence and documentation and can call witnesses if necessary. If your complaint is upheld, the committee will make an appropriate response and recommend to the Management Committee any redress or compensation.

2. Admissions complaint and appeal procedure for accredited courses

2.1 If an applicant has not been accepted for admission to an accredited course of study and is unhappy with this decision, s/he must put the complaint in writing within 14 days to the relevant Head of Department, who will respond in writing to the complainant also normally within 14 days although a longer response time may be required during academic holidays. If, in the opinion of the applicant, the matter has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, an appeal may be made. A copy of this complaints procedure will be sent with the Head of Department's response.

2.2 Appeals

2.2.1 An applicant who has not been given a place on an accredited Mary Ward course may appeal either on grounds relevant to the Centre's guidance for admission to accredited courses or on grounds relevant to the specific criteria stated for the particular course. Allegations of discrimination on grounds such as race or gender will also be dealt with under this procedure, with reference to the Centre's Equal Opportunities Policy, a copy of which will be sent to the complainant on request.

2.2.2 An appeal should be made in writing to the Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality within fourteen days of receiving the response of the Head of Department. In making the appeal, the applicant should set out the ground(s) for appeal, as given above, together with any supporting

evidence. The Vice Principal, on behalf of the Principal, will determine whether the appeal meets the criteria stated above.

- 2.2.3 Where the appeal is allowed to proceed by the Vice Principal, s/he will ask the Head of Department to respond in writing within 14 working days of receiving the request. The response of the Head of Department will be forwarded to the applicant, who will have the opportunity to comment. Comments will normally be required within 14 days of receipt of the response.
- 2.2.4 On receipt of any comments from the applicant, or after the 14 day period given to reply, the Vice Principal will convene a panel to discuss the written evidence
- 2.2.5 The Vice Principal will provide the Appeal Panel with a copy of the original appeal and any supporting material submitted by the applicant, the response made by the Head of Department, and any further comments on that response from the applicant.
- 2.2.6 The Appeal Panel will be constituted as follows:
 - The Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality
 - A Head of Department from a department other than that to which the application was made
 - The Chair of the Standing Complaints Committee or their nominee (who will chair the Appeal Panel)
 - The panel may co-opt an additional member if it feels particular expertise is required, e.g. an academic member of staff or member of the governing body who has subject expertise but has not been involved in the disputed application.
- 2.2.7 It is expected that the information provided to the Appeal Panel will be sufficient for a recommendation to be reached. However, should the panel deem it necessary, it may invite the applicant or a representative of the Department to be present at the meeting of the Appeal Panel.
- 2.2.8 The Chair of the Equality Assurance Committee or their representative will advise the Appeal Panel as appropriate and may be invited to attend the meeting of the panel for this purpose.

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 It shall be open to the Panel to uphold the appeal or to reject it. The Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality will notify the appellant and the relevant Head of Department of the decision in writing within seven working days of the panel meeting.

- 3.2 If the appeal is upheld, the Chair of the Panel will write to the Head of Department to which the appellant applied, stating the grounds for the decision, and directing the Department to consider the application again. This does not, however, commit the Department to reversing its initial decision, as there may be other reasons for rejecting the application.
- 3.3 The outcome of the appeal process will be final and no further appeal will be permitted.

Further appeal on complaints regarding general matters or admission to an accredited course

If you are still unhappy and think the Centre has been unreasonable or is not doing its job properly you can complain, within three months of the Centre concluding its own complaints procedure, to:

London Central Learning and Skills Council
Centrepoint
103 Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1DR Tel: 0845 019 4144

The Secretary of State
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
Kingsgate House
Victoria St
Westminster
London
SW1P Tel: 0870 000 2288

Outcomes

1. The Centre commits itself to addressing all points of issue in any complaint. Redress will be readily available and will be appropriate to the complaint.
2. Appropriate redress will be determined by the Principal, or by the Management Committee following the recommendations of the Complaints/Disciplinary Standing Committee if the matter has been referred to the Complaints Committee.
3. Regrets can be expected to be expressed spontaneously regardless of the nature of the complaint.

4. Apologies/redress will be extended, where appropriate, to others who may have suffered in the same way as a person who complains, but who may not have made a formal complaint.
5. People's levels of satisfaction with the way their complaint was handled and redressed will be monitored.

Using complaints to improve the quality of our service

1. All complaints will be recorded and will provide information to assist the Centre in improving its service. Trends in complaints will be analysed to identify areas where appropriate action is needed.
2. It will be the responsibility of the Principal to monitor the recording system and to provide an annual report to the Centre's Management Committee.
3. Any implications for service delivery will be recorded and circulated to all staff.
4. Handling complaints will be covered in all new staff's induction and will feature in staff training.

Note to Complaints Policy

All references to "working days" in the document above are presumed to refer only to term times.