The University of Edinburgh Policy and Procedure for Applicants with Declared Disabilities

1. Purpose

1.1 To set out principles and procedures for the management of applications from potential students who have declared a disability, to ensure that such information is used to the benefit of the applicant.

2. Principles

2.1 The University of Edinburgh is committed to providing inclusive education which meets the specific needs of individual students. The University welcomes applications from people with disabilities, health conditions and specific learning difficulties, and aims to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged due to a disability or impairment.

2.2 This policy and procedure forms part of the wider University of Edinburgh Admissions Policy, and refers to applicants applying to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University of Edinburgh, and to visiting students.

2.3 The policy sets out procedures for admissions staff to ensure that applications received from applicants with declared disabilities are treated fairly. The procedures seek to ensure that applicants are considered on the basis of their aptitude, skills and ability in relation to their proposed programme of study.

2.4 Information regarding an applicant’s disability is not used in the academic decision making process. It is used constructively to ensure that we can make necessary adjustments in order that a programme of study is accessible to the applicant.

2.5 The University strongly encourages applicants to provide information about any disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty that they have, in their application, or as soon as possible after the application is submitted.

3. Background

3.1 Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

3.2 The Equality Act defines disability as: "A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities", where "substantial" means more than minor or trivial and "impairment" includes long term, fluctuating or progressive medical conditions.
3.3 "Discrimination arising from disability" would occur if a disabled student were to be treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability. Discrimination is only justifiable if it can be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim – e.g. maintaining academic/other standards. NB: lack of intent to discriminate is not a defence. Discrimination arising solely from disability is illegal, even if it is unintentional.

3.4 Reasonable adjustments must be made where disabled people experience a “substantial disadvantage”. Adjustments should be *anticipatory*, and should relate to three areas:

- Provision, criteria or practice
- Physical features
- Auxiliary aids

3.5 The Equality Act also allows for “positive action”. A university can, therefore, advertise that applications are welcomed from all groups and can target groups that are under-represented on a particular course. In addition, it is possible to advertise courses as open to disabled people only, since it is not unlawful to treat disabled people more favourably than non-disabled people.

**PROCEDURE**

4. **Applicants with a declared disability**

4.1 All applicants to the University of Edinburgh are encouraged to declare any disability that they may have in the relevant section of their UCAS/UCAS TT or Postgraduate application form. The lists of disability codes currently used by UCAS and by the EUCLID Postgraduate Admissions System are provided in Appendix 1.

4.2 In addition, applicants are encouraged to provide information relating to their disability, and in particular whether additional facilities or support are likely to be required during the course of their studies. This could be included in the application, or through direct contact with the University.

4.3 Visiting students are asked to indicate whether or not they have a disability, but are not asked for details of the disability in the application form. Those who have indicated that they have a disability are contacted directly by the Student Disability Service.

4.4 If an applicant has declared a disability on their application form, this data is captured in EUCLID.

4.5 Applicants (except for applicants to programmes detailed in Section 6: Professional Programmes) who have not provided any information on disability, and who have not ticked any box, will be deemed not to have a declared disability, although that status would be changed should the applicant provide information regarding a disability later in the admissions process.
5. **Selection Procedures**

5.1 Selection is carried out either by professional admissions officers or by academic selectors for specific programmes. For the purposes of this document the term “admissions selector” will be used to include both types of selector.

5.2 The selection procedure for applications from students with a declared disability is identical to the process for all other applications.

5.3 Applications are assessed against agreed selection criteria for each undergraduate degree programme or postgraduate programme. Applications that meet the minimum entry requirements progress to a selection process in which each application received by the specified deadline is given full and equal consideration.

5.4 Consideration of a declared disability and any required adjustments will take place separately, after the academic selection decision has been made. Where no adjustments are required, or the adjustments are straightforward, an offer will be made as normal. If discussions are required with the applicant regarding the required adjustments, the offer will remain on hold until those discussions are completed. Further details of this process are given below.

5.5 All information provided by an applicant regarding his/her disability will be treated as confidential. It will be shared only for the purposes of making reasonable adjustments.

6. **Reasonable adjustments**

6.1 Admissions selectors are not expected to assess what adjustments will need to be made in order for an applicant with a declared disability to successfully access their studies at the University of Edinburgh. However, it may sometimes be necessary for admissions selectors to request additional information from an applicant about his/her disability, and to discuss this information with the Student Disability Service and, in some cases, the Programme Director, after the selection process has been completed but before an offer is issued. This is most likely to be the case for programmes where there are professional registration requirements related to core competencies or fitness to practice (see Section 7 below).

6.2 In many cases, applicants will have provided information about any specific support they will require in order to study at the University within their application. An admissions selector may be aware that the support requested is readily available (for example, exam support for a student with dyslexia, large print handouts for a visually impaired student; accessible seminar rooms for a person with mobility difficulties) in which case the offer can be made as normal. If the admissions selector is uncertain as to whether the required support is available, he/she should contact the Student Disability Service and, in some cases, the Programme Director for advice. In most cases, this will lead to the offer being made as normal.

6.3 In some cases, applicants will not have provided information about any specific support they will require when studying at the University. In such situations, if the applicant has indicated that he/she has a specific learning difficulty, the admissions
selector can make the assumption that any support needs can be met and make the offer as normal.

6.4 If the applicant has indicated any disability other than a specific learning difficulty, the admissions selector should contact the applicant and ask for more information about any adjustments required, prior to making the offer. A template letter/email is provided as Appendix 2. When additional information is received, it should be saved within the EUCLID record. At this point, the admissions selector should follow the process as set out in 6.2 above.

6.5 If an applicant fails to respond to the request to provide additional information within 10 working days, this will be recorded on EUCLID in the notes field of the applicant record and the offer will be made as normal.

6.6 Following discussion with the Student Disability Service and Programme Director, if it appears that there may be difficulties in making the adjustments required to enable the applicant to access the programme, the Student Disability Service will facilitate further discussions with the applicant to try to resolve the issue. This may include a meeting with the applicant and the Programme Director, where that is possible. The application will be on hold during this process. There will be no requirement for the admissions selector to contact the applicant since the applicant will be part of the discussion organised by the Student Disability Service. If the decision is taken that the offer can be made, the admissions selector will be informed and will be able make the offer as normal.

6.7 Very occasionally, following the discussions set out in 6.6, it may not be possible to make the adjustments required to enable the applicant to undertake the course applied for. For example, this may be because the person is unable to meet the professional competencies or fitness to practice requirements of the course (see Section 7 below), or because of health and safety risks related to equipment which the applicant would be required to use on the course. In these situations, the School and the Student Disability Service would work with the student to consider if a place on an appropriate alternative programme could be offered.

6.8 If no agreement can be reached regarding an alternative programme, and the University decides that it cannot offer a place to the student, the applicant should be informed of this decision in writing by a senior member of staff (Head of College or his/her nominated representative), and provided with reasons as to why no reasonable adjustments were possible. The applicant should be assisted in the process of securing an appropriate alternative programme at another institution.

6.9 In the event that the University finds that it is unable to meet an applicant’s support needs after the offer has been issued (e.g. when an applicant discloses a disability after an offer has been made), it may in exceptional circumstances be necessary to withdraw the offer. In such cases the applicant will be informed of the reasons as to why no reasonable adjustments were possible. Whenever possible, the applicant should be involved in discussions to find a place on an appropriate alternative programme at the University of Edinburgh and, if this is not possible, the applicant should be assisted in the process of securing an appropriate alternative programme at another institution.
7. **Professional Programmes: Core Competencies and Fitness to Practice**

7.1 Some professional programmes such as medicine, veterinary medicine, teacher training, social work and nursing require a student to meet certain “core competencies” or “fitness to practice” conditions in order to receive professional registration. Information about these requirements should be available to prospective applicants to assist them in making informed decisions when choosing to apply for a course. Links to HEOPS fitness to practice information would be appropriate.

7.2 It is possible that a condition which might impact on an applicant’s ability to meet the fitness to practice standards may not have been declared through the disability code system. For example, the HEOPS guidance on fitness to practice veterinary medicine specifically mentions allergies, but an applicant may not have considered this to be a disability when completing the form. It is therefore suggested that a link to the relevant HEOPS fitness to practice information be included in all offer letters for medicine, veterinary medicine, teacher training, social work or nursing, and that offer holders be encouraged to contact the admissions office should they wish to discuss any concerns they have about their ability to meet these standards.

7.3 All applicants for the MBChB programme who have declared a disability and who fall into the offer range after the standard selection process will be contacted by the College admissions office to obtain further information relating to the disability. No decision will be made on an application until this information has been received. If the information highlights any concerns, it will be considered by the admissions selector in consultation first with the MBChB Admissions Disability sub-committee to determine any professional competence issues, and then with the Student Disability Service to determine whether the student can be admitted to the degree programme. The applicant will be involved in these discussions wherever possible.

7.4 For applicants to other professional degree programmes (i.e. teacher training, nursing, social work and veterinary medicine) information regarding a declared disability will be considered by the admissions selector alongside any guidelines from the professional/regulatory body regarding admission of students with disabilities. Where a programme includes a placement component, consideration should be given to what reasonable adjustments will be required to be made by partner placement agencies in order for the applicant to complete their programme of study. If necessary, alternatives to the normal placements should be considered.

7.5 Where consideration of the information provided by the applicant indicates that any necessary adjustments can be made and, in the judgement of the admissions selector, there are no other barriers (professional or otherwise) to admitting the applicant, the decision will normally be to make an offer of admission.

7.6 Where it appears that an applicant may not be able to meet professional requirements, the admissions selector should investigate with the relevant professional or regulatory body and with the appropriate academic School whether these requirements are relevant. Consideration should be given to alternative means of achieving competence standards. The Student Disability Service can provide advice, and the applicant should be involved in discussions wherever possible.

7.7 For more information regarding professional requirements, please follow the links below:
HEOPS fitness to train standards:
http://www.heops.org.uk/fitness_standards.php

Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons policy and day one competency requirements:

Student disability policy

Day and Year One competences

8. Interviews / Auditions

8.1 If the selection procedure involves an interview or audition, all applicants should be asked if they require any adjustments to be put in place for the interview or audition, and the admissions selector should make adequate arrangements to ensure that an applicant with additional needs is not disadvantaged. The Student Disability Service can provide advice if required.

9. Reports and Communications

9.1 All communications with offer holders should include the University’s accessibility statement, offering to provide communications in an alternative format if required.

9.2 Student Recruitment and Admissions run monthly reports identifying undergraduate and postgraduate offer holders who have declared a disability. Later in the cycle these will be modified to show only UF applicants. The relevant reports are sent to Estates and Buildings, and to College undergraduate and postgraduate admissions offices. Should any other service require copies of these reports, they should contact Student Recruitment and Admissions to make a request.

9.3 The Student Disability Service currently runs its own reports. During the admissions cycle, SDS will send a standard email to all offer holders who have declared a disability, sign-posting them to the support services available.

9.4 The Student Disability Service will also proactively contact UF students for further information where necessary, and to advise Estates and Buildings, and Accommodation Services in order to plan ahead. SDS will act as the main point of contact between the new students and these services.

9.5 College undergraduate and postgraduate admissions offices should provide academic Schools with details of any UF applicants who have declared disabilities during the admissions cycle and should provide a finalised list as soon as possible after confirmation, in order that Schools can begin to plan any adjustments required, in consultation with the Student Disability Service. Schools will be expected to ensure that Personal Tutors are aware if any of their students have declared a disability.
9.6 All invitations to Offer Holders’ Visit Days or any other post-application event should include information about the Student Disability Service to encourage both applicants who have declared a disability, and those who have not, to take the opportunity to speak to SDS staff if they feel it may be beneficial to them. An example of this would be:

“The University’s Student Disability Service provides support to students with a wide variety of additional needs, and staff are happy to meet with new students at the [Offer Holders’ Visit]. Please visit their website to make an appointment: http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/home”

10. Feedback, Appeals and Complaints

10.1 Where the decision has been taken not to offer a place to an applicant, the applicant may request feedback and subsequently make an appeal or a complaint, using the process set out in the University of Edinburgh Admissions Feedback, Appeals and Complaint Policy.

11. Monitoring

11.1 Student Recruitment and Admissions will liaise with the Student Disability Service and other University offices as appropriate to keep admissions staff informed of any changes to legislation that might impact on disability issues.

11.2 Student Recruitment and Admissions has responsibility for providing regular data reports to College admissions offices relating to the numbers of applications and offers made to students with declared disabilities.

11.3 Admissions statistics are published on the University of Edinburgh website on an annual basis (http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-recruitment/admissions-advice/admissions-statistics) and equality data on student entrants to the University is published by the Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/monitoring-statistics/edmarc).


Approved: March 2014

Review: June 2015
Appendix 1

**UCAS Disability Codes:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>No disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>You have a social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>You are blind or have a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>You are deaf or have a serious hearing impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>You have a long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>You have a mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>You have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>You have physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>You have a disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>You have two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EUCLID Disability Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No disability (HESA code 00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Multiple disabilities (HESA code 08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learning difficulty (HESA code 51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Autistic disorder (HESA code 53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unseen disability (HESA code 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mental health (HESA code 55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Wheelchair/mobility (HESA code 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Deaf/partial hearing (HESA code 57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Blind/partial sight (HESA code 58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Other disability (HESA code 96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Request for further information from an applicant who has declared a disability

Ref

Dear Title Surname

Course reference and title

I am writing with regard to your application for admission to the above programme of study at the University of Edinburgh, commencing in September XXXX.

In your application you have indicated that you have a disability, with the code XXX. I would be grateful if you could provide me with some more information about your condition, including details of any support or adjustments you have received in your previous place of study to assist you in accessing your course(s). Any information you provide will be considered separately to the academic consideration of your application, and will be used only to ensure that appropriate support will be available to you at the University of Edinburgh should your application be successful.

If we need to speak to you further about support arrangements, I will contact you again and arrange for a discussion with our Student Disability Service to take place.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Admissions Officer