Learner Support & Super Group Policy

Introduction

Debut Academy aims to provide the highest quality of Learner Services and Support, which seeks to aid, develop and encourage all our learners to fulfil their academic and personal potential whilst benefiting from College life. In the delivery of our learner support / services, we have a learner centred approach in which access is provided to an extensive range of support/learner services which are reflective of the needs of all College learners.

This Policy will ensure that all learners and staff are aware of the nature, extent, purpose and location of all the services and facilities that we provide and how learners can best access and benefit from their provision.

All learners, through the individual guidance notes related to this policy, will be made aware of their first points of contact for advice, guidance, support, welfare, health services, counselling and well-being. We fully appreciate that learners may come to us with a past history that may include areas that they are personally trying to manage/cope with. In that respect, with appropriate and early support, learners will have the means to cope with or help them resolve any personal matters, stay on programme and succeed. By supporting learners in this way they are more likely to cope with the work required to gain their full qualification and support their transition into further education or employment.

Scope

This policy aims to provide an overarching Policy with regard to Learner Support and encompasses many aspects of the services provided by the Learner & Staff Services staff members.

These Include:
• Accommodation – help and liaison with outside agencies
• Transition into Apprenticeship or within the workplace
• Careers Guidance and Related Work Experience
• Counselling
• Anti-Bullying
• Learning Support (1:1, Scribe, Reader)
• Personal Development Behaviour and Welfare Support & Courses
• Learner Financial Support
• Special Examination Guidance & Extra Time Allowance
• UCAS Guidance
• Learner References
• Learner Bursary Advice
• Learner Voice
• Health & Wellbeing Advice & Guidance

Responsibility and Authority

Debut Training Academy has ultimate responsibility for staff, learner and employees and will ensure that the arrangements for overseeing learner support are effective, robust and reviewed on a regular basis. As such two senior members of staff have been designated as Learning Support Personnel.

The designated support personnel are:
Claire Eustace
Support Officer/Learner Mentor
01268 560552
Claire@debutacademy.com

Linda Edwards
Deputy Support Officer
01268 560552
linda@debutacademy.com

Supporting Learning & Equality & Diversity
Learner Support includes a full range of services available for learners to get the most out of their time at Debut Academy. This includes financial advice and support, welfare and counselling services, pastoral and learning support. The Academy welcomes applications from learners who have a disability, learning difficulty, mental health or medical condition and actively encourages early disclosure of support needs and requirements to ensure effective support can begin from the start of a learner's journey.

Assessing Learner Needs
The Learner Support Co-ordinator will also assist learners in:
• arranging screening, initial and expert assessments of disability or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia etc.
• arranging needs assessments in support of identifying reasonable adjustment requirements
• making Disabled Learners' Allowance claims
• arranging for provision of specialist support, including readers, sign-language interpreters, note-takers, lip readers and nonmedical personal assistants
• arranging any special assessment arrangements (under assessment reasonable adjustments)
• arranging for information materials to be made available in alternative formats (eg Braille or audio formats).

Although Debut Academy makes every attempt to include and welcome learners of all abilities, if after initial assessment and evaluation of the learners ability it is found that it is not at a reasonable level to be able to reasonably cope and achieve with the work associated with the qualification they have applied for, (even with support in place), they will be signposted to an alternative course that may best suit their ability.

We strongly feel it is not responsible to enrol learners onto a course that they would personally struggle with and are unlikely to achieve. NVQs are qualifications that should ideally be achieved in a stepping stone format to ensure learners feel confident and happy in the knowledge they can successful meet all the needs required of the qualification.

Reasonable Adjustments in Learning, Teaching & Assessment
Reasonable adjustments are those made to overcome the disadvantages that an individual learner may suffer because of a specific disability. The desire to make adjustments to overcome identified disadvantage must be balanced with considerations of academic standards, health and safety concerns, practical and financial feasibility and the requirement that in overcoming disadvantage to one, others are not disadvantaged, as a consequence.

To ensure reasonable adjustments can be put in place, learners must provide any documentary evidence as necessary (ie., statement relating to special educational needs).

The following, by illustration, lists some adjustments that, on the basis of a needs assessment report, are considered reasonable. They include adjustments concerning the access to learning resources and activities, additional learning and teaching support and revisions to assessment arrangements

Access to Learning Resources and Activities
These adjustments will be made to ensure that learners have fair access to learning resources and activities, where a needs assessment report indicates the value to the individual in overcoming a disability:

• the timetabling and room scheduling process takes into account the mobility of individual learners
• where staff are based in the few offices that are inaccessible to disabled individuals, the receptionist in the Main Building will organise for the staff member to meet with learners in accessible rooms

As well as the support offered through Learner Support, learners may expect the following adjustments to be made by Assessors, upon request by learners and where agreed with the Learner Support Co-ordinator.

Learners are expected to discuss their specific needs with tutors, to ensure that they receive the most appropriate additional support. Tutors who require guidance on a reasonable adjustment request may seek the guidance of the Learner Support Officer.

Reasonable adjustment requests, based on needs assessment reports, from individuals may include:
• allowing support assistant, signers, note-takers, guide or hearing dogs into classes, to be seated in a position that allows them to undertake their role, in support of the disabled learner
• providing teaching materials in advance of classes, in either digital form (for the learner to customise to their own needs) or in a form requested by the learner (eg paper colour, font type or size)
• tutors wearing a microphone
• tutors allowing class to be audio-taped. Where this is requested by the learner, they may be advised, if the tutor so wishes, that the content of the class remains the intellectual property of the lecturer and the tape must only be used for personal use and must not be copied, other than for their own transcription purposes.

Counselling & Welfare
Pastoral Care at Debut Academy is of the utmost importance. Each learner is assigned a course Assessor/Tutor who is the first point of contact for each learner and will ensure each learner's learning journey is progressing well, as well as being there to address any worries they may have.

Our Safeguarding Officer Helena Lungley or Learning Mentor Claire Eustace will be able to provide help and advice on any pastoral or practical problems. Learners have access to

confidential support and the Academy will link up with outside agencies or charities, as well as South Essex College if additional external support is required.

Personal, Social, Emotional or Developmental Self-Assessment Form
Each learner will be asked to complete both a PSED Assessment and Additional Information Sheet upon enrolment. Both these forms will gather background information on the individual learner so that Debut are aware from the outset of their journey what specific areas have impacted on them in the past, still impact on them or what may impact on their successful completion of their qualification.

Learners will then be supported and have access to complimentary online support courses that Debut recommends may be suitable for their needs. The learner will be encouraged to work though these courses during their learning journey and their progress is assessed at support review meetings. These courses are not a complete solution to any problem but are a option for learners, especially if they are not obtaining help elsewhere via their GP or any other outside agency.

These courses endeavour to support areas of:
• Depression
• Low Confidence
• Anxiety
• Stress Management
• Anger Management
• Managing Money
• Low Literacy Ability
• Successful Job Seeking Skills
• Low ICT Skills

These support courses are optional, and whilst most learners may feel that they are able to self-manage themselves what may be impacting on their wellbeing or health, this is usually not always successful and ongoing support is necessary. If a learner undertakes a support course and decides that it was not entirely effective, then Debut will seek alternative support measure elsewhere.

Where Debut is able to provide learner support with funding, specific support forms will be generated. Learners will receive regular reviews and their feedback on how the support is impacting on them is sought on a regular basis. Their support plans may be adapted depending on their or their Tutor's feedback.

Classroom Practice
All learners, but particularly those with certain disabilities and specific learning difficulties, will benefit from tutors:
• facing the class when speaking
• previewing all topics / classes and relating them to earlier topics / classes
• making it clear what learners are expected to be able to do or know at the end of the class (review of learning that has taken place)
• summarising the main points to the class
• repeating learner' questions clearly for other learners to hear
• providing explicit guidance on essential and recommended reading in advance of classes
• providing glossaries of technical terms

• giving instructions regarding class organisation or assessment in writing as well as orally
 • using a variety of teaching methods and varying activities as well as using different teaching aids eg., hand-outs, videos, specimens or samples, overhead slides, whiteboards, games, quizzes etc.
• Linking the learner up with a 'study buddy' or learning mentor

In Work Based Practice
All learners who are on apprenticeship and receive work based training and guidance throughout their competence based qualification should also be fully supported under the same guidelines as those of classroom based learners. The learner's Tutor will liaise closely with the Employer to ensure he/she has full understanding of the learner's needs and provide support accordingly, reviewing the effectiveness of this at appropriate intervals.

Curriculum Modification
The curriculum can be modified to the extent that learners will be supported, as far as is reasonable, to develop the intellectual, practical, technical and transferable skills and the knowledge and understanding demanded within the published programme specification.

Where a learner's disability prevents them from being able to develop specific skills (eg practical skills requiring good co-ordination), Debut will assess the learner to determine if the qualification criteria can be fulfilled to the Industry and Awarding Body Standards. It may be possible that a programme can be negotiated that allows the learner, within the constraints of their disability, to develop and demonstrate skills, knowledge and understanding commensurate with HABIA and the Awarding Body VTCT. Such programmes will be negotiated by the learner, Learner Support Co-ordinator and Center Lead IQA. If it is determined that the learner cannot fulfil the requirements of the qualification then we would advise them to any alternative course routes that may be more suited to their needs.

Super Groups
These are additional tutorials or sessions that Debut Academy will plan in over and above all scheduled classes. Tutors will inform the Centre Manager or Teaching & Learning Lead of any learners that may require support and recommend them to attend to gain the necessary support in a specific area. These will be planned around classroom and tutor availability, running for a period of time to comprehensively deliver elements that are needed. These super groups may involve catching up learners on lessons missed, including any 1:1 elements, practical recapping, theory delivery or Maths and English. Learners will be given advance notice of super group sessions, detailing dates and times, including the topics to be delivered. The learners who attend these sessions will have their attendance recorded on a register so their guided learning hours (if low) will be improved.

Learning Materials
All learners will benefit from tutors:
• distributing hand-outs, including overhead transparencies or slides, at the beginning of classes or in advance, through the virtual learning environment, so that learners can customise to their preferred font, size or paper colour or for software reading
• using a simple sans serif font, such as Ariel or Comic, for all written materials, not using more than one font within a document and using a minimum of 11 point for hand-outs and 24 point on overhead transparencies or projected slides
• using short bulleted or numbered points, not blocks of text
• restricting slides to 6 points and 20 words

• using wide margins, and left justification
• not using upper case letters for whole words
• using bold for highlighting rather than italics or underlining
• using a soft colour paper, ideally cream, rather than white
• avoiding background graphics but using pictures, figures or graphs to explain points where possible
• avoiding use of garish or unnecessary colour, providing coloured overlays for learners to place over screens or pages so they can read any text more easily

Assessment
All learners will benefit from tutors:
• avoiding assessments which rely on rote learning large volumes of information
• offering the opportunity to receive feedback orally, as well as in writing
• making assessment tasks as explicit as is reasonable, with transparent but concise assessment and marking criteria
• ensuring examination duration is sufficient for learners to read through their work and take rest breaks from writing (of at least 5 minutes in the hour), whilst remaining at their desks
• delivering information in short bursts, taking into account learners who may have a shorter attention span
• observing the needs of their learners individually, looking at the details on their personal profile and adapting lessons accordingly for differentiation and inclusion

Assessment Arrangements
Assessment arrangements should be organised to ensure that a learner's disability does not unfairly, disadvantage them in demonstrating that they can satisfy module learning outcomes. Reasonable adjustments typically include revising the assessment arrangements and, in those circumstances where this is not appropriate, offering an alternative mode of assessment. In the case of the latter, the learner is expected to meet the same academic standards as other learners and all module learning outcomes must be assessed. Reasonable adjustments that are typically made are listed below.

The following adjustments may be made, where agreed with the Learner Support Officer at least four weeks before examinations commence:
• additional time of 25% of the assessment duration
• using large print format or colour overlays
• providing assistive technology such as a PC, voice activated PC or Dictaphone advance of examinations
• in exceptional circumstances, providing rest breaks, where a needs assessment report indicates more than five minutes per hour are required
• providing clean, unmarked dictionaries or specialist spell checkers
• providing personal assistance in the form of a signer, reader, scribe or prompter

Only in exceptional circumstances can assessments that are written in a language other than English be assisted through the use of a scribe. In assessments where a scribe is exceptionally used and criteria include the accuracy of spelling, a separate spelling test will be undertaken by the candidate.

Where time constrained assessments are organised outside of the formal examination periods, the Centre Manager is responsible for liaising with the Examinations Officer to ensure that these adjustments are made.

Such in-class assessments are normally constrained to specific weeks in an academic year, in order to ensure that special support needs can be met, Learners must make individual tutors aware of their needs at least four weeks in advance of such assessments, so that any reasonable adjustments can be considered.

In giving feedback, tutors should be mindful that typical errors of learners with a Specific Learning Difficulty such as dyslexia, (identified by LADS screening or by a similar report) include:
• omitted words or punctuation
• excessive or misplaced punctuation
• repeated phrases
• unsophisticated language or simplified language (often part of a strategy to reduce grammatical or spelling errors, but which doesn't necessarily denote unsophisticated thinking)

Tutors should also be mindful of the limitations of spell-checkers. Typical errors, identified by Debut, include:
• homophone substitutions (there/their; effect/affect; course/coarse)
• phonetic equivalents (frenetic for phonetic; homerfone for homophone)
• incorrect word substitutions (distance for disturbance)
• American spellings (colorful)

Learners are expected to seek guidance from Learner Support staff so that they are able to prepare appropriately, thinking skills, structured reports and essays and develop strategies for the accurate presentation of written work. Learners are also expected to use assistive technology (eg spell-checkers) in overcoming problems with presenting written work, caused by their disability. Where it is essential that specialist terms are distinguished between each other (eg where two similarly correctly spelt words are phonetically the same but have very different meanings or serious consequences if confused with each other), learners are expected to develop spelling strategies for these specialist terms, with a Learner Support Tutor's support.

Additional Advice: Some Useful Links
The following list provides details of contact details and website links that individuals may wish to go to for further information:

Action on Access – National co-ordination team for widening participation in Higher Education. Web: http://www.actiononaccess.org

Action on Hearing Loss (Previously the Royal National Institute for the Deaf) http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/

Adult Dyslexia Organisation (ADO) Adult Dyslexia Organisation ADO advances the cause of adults with dyslexia through research, education and campaigning, lobbying and training. Web: http://adult-dyslexia.org/

British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Information and advice on dyslexia for dyslexic people and those who support them. Web: http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/

Dyslexia Action Information about dyslexia services. Dyslexia associated training, teaching and publication details. Web: http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/

DEMOS Project – Online materials for staff development relating to learning & teaching and disability awareness for academic staff. (please note – useful information but has not been recently updated). http://www.jarmin.com/demos/

Equality and Human Rights Commission– Offers advice on measures to prevent disability discrimination and a conciliation service. Web: http://www.drc-gb.org

Equality Challenge Unit – supports the higher education sector in its mission to realise the potential of all staff and students. Web: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/

Higher Education Academy – Helps universities and colleges and their staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students (including those with a disability). Web: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk

National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) – A professional association for anyone who works in the post 16 education sector involved in the management or delivery of services for disabled students. Web: http://www.nadp-uk.org

National Association Access Centres (NAAC) – Information & advice on how and where to get a student's study needs assessed. Web: http://www.nnac.org/

Mind – National Association for Mental Health Web: http://www.mind.org.uk Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) Web: http://www.rnib.org.uk

TechDis – Provides information on making electronic materials accessible Web: http://www.techdis.ac.uk

Please refer to Debut's linked policies below for additional information regarding Learning Support & Super Group Policy :

- Admissions & Application Policy
- Apprenticeship Expectation Policy
- Contingency & Change of Circumstance Policy
- Counselling Policy
- Communications Policy
- Confidentiality & Disclosure Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Employer (Work Based) Support & Expectation Policy
- Equal Opportunities & Inclusion Policy
- Functional Skills Policy
- Grading, Academic Standards & Feedback Policy
- Guidance Policy
- Health & Wellbeing Policy
- IAG Policy
- Initial Assessment Policy
- Induction Procedure – Learner Policy
- Learner Safeguarding & Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

- Mentoring – Learner Policy
- Observation of Teaching, Learning & Assessment Policy
- Off-Site Educational Trip & In Workplace Tutoring Policy
- Review & Appraisal – Learner Policy
- Staff Confidentiality Policy
- Skills for Life/Transferrable Skills Policy
- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy

Policy Revision
Issue 03 - Updated August 2016
Revision Date – August 2017