

**Imperial College
London**

Supporting disabled staff effectively

Guidance for managers

Contents

How to use this guidance	4
How is disability defined?	4
What support can Imperial provide?	7
Determining support needs	7
SWELL Plans	8
Workplace (reasonable) adjustments	8
Fire safety	9
Leave for attending appointments and sickness absence	10
Managing sickness absence	11
Confidentiality	12
Recruitment	13
Financial funding	14
Funding for specialist workplace assessments	14
Access to Work	14
Staff with carer's responsibility	16
Appendix 1: Examples of disability	17
Appendix 2: Examples of workplace adjustments	18
Useful contacts	19

At Imperial, we are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all staff. We are a Disability Confident Leader, a government scheme designed to encourage employers to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions. Our managers play a key role in helping us to maintain and develop best practice in relation to disability support.

As an educational establishment, we have a legal duty to anticipate to the needs of disabled students and make reasonable adjustments for our disabled staff. Acting in an 'anticipatory' fashion demands that education providers plan for the needs of disabled people as a whole, as opposed to simply responding on a case-by-case basis.

This guidance outlines how a manager should fulfil their responsibilities and

provide support to a disabled member of staff. In any situation, a manager's first concern on being made aware of a disability is to support the member of staff with any workplace adjustments and proactively provide for their needs. During recruitment, prospective members of staff are encouraged to tell us if they need any particular adjustments or support at a job interview.

Managers play a key role in helping us to maintain and develop best practice in relation to disability support.

How to use this guidance

As a manager, you can use this guidance in a number of situations:

- supporting an existing member of staff who has a disability or long-term condition
- working with a member of staff who has recently informed you of a disability or long-term condition
- during recruitment.

It is important to remember that in some cases a person may only become aware that they have a

disability after they experience difficulties with certain tasks or activities. Individuals with a long-standing, non-visible disability, such as mental ill health or dyslexia, may only inform their manager or the College after they have settled into a job.

During recruitment, some prospective members of staff may be concerned that they will not be offered the job if they inform a disability. New employees can tell the College about their disability in confidence through the online ICIS system or by speaking directly to their line manager.


How is disability defined?

The Equality Act (2010) defines a disability as any condition that substantially interferes with a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities and lasts, or is expected to last, for more than twelve months. Examples of conditions that are defined as a disability are given in Appendix 1. Normal day-to-day activities are defined as involving any of the following:


- mobility
- doing something with your hands
- physical coordination
- continence (controlling your bladder and bowels)

- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or the ability to concentrate, learn or understand.

Imperial aims to adopt the social model of disability, which states that disability is caused by the way that society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment or difference. It looks at ways to remove the barriers that restrict life choices of disabled people. By removing these barriers, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, and have choice and control over their own lives.



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A photograph of three people sitting at a long, dark metal table outdoors on a grassy area. On the left, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a blue lanyard, sits on a blue chair, resting her chin on her hand. In the center, a man with a beard, wearing a light blue striped shirt, sits on a metal stool, holding a yellow pencil. On the right, a woman with dark hair, wearing a grey sweater, sits on a white chair, facing away from the camera. On the table are a blue water bottle, a white water bottle, and some papers. In the background is a modern building with large glass windows and a stone facade. A large, bright yellow triangle is on the right side of the image, and a large teal triangle is at the bottom.

As a line manager at Imperial, you have primary responsibility for ensuring the necessary adjustments are in place.

Staff and line manager responsibilities

Employers are legally obliged to make workplace adjustments to enable disabled people to carry out their work successfully. Imperial Expectations emphasises the key role that managers play in upholding equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

As a line manager at Imperial, you have primary responsibility for ensuring the necessary adjustments are in place, as soon as reasonably possible, for any disabled members of staff in your team. There are a number of sources of advice and assistance available at the College to help you to meet this responsibility, as outlined below.

All line managers should encourage their staff to record and update their personal details on ICIS; this includes telling the College if they have a disability or long-term condition. The information provided is kept confidential. These data assist the College to plan and to help meet the needs of disabled staff, for example ensuring the appropriate resources, support and training are available in College.

Determining support needs

When you are thinking about support, it is essential that you speak to the member of staff and avoid making assumptions. Most workplace adjustments are made on a common-sense basis after a discussion between a manager and the member of staff about what might be helpful and possible. It is best practice to take the lead from the employee, as they may know exactly what adjustments are needed.

However, some employees may not know what adjustments are needed, for example if they have recently acquired a disability. Line managers should not expect disabled employees to be experts in their disability.

During your discussion, you should ask the member of staff how Imperial could support them effectively in the workplace and what additional adjustments they might find useful. You should not ask for in-depth information about the member of staff's medical history or evidence of their disability.

You can also access advice from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre, Occupational Health or Human Resources if you need to.

Find out more

Updating personal details on ICIS

www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/admin-systems/icis

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-centre

Occupational Health

www.imperial.ac.uk/occupational-health

Human Resources

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources

Imperial Expectations

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/working-at-imperial/imperial-expectations/

SWELL Plans

Imperial's Staying Well (SWELL) Plan has been developed and adapted from Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP®) and the mental health charity Mind's Wellness Action Plan. WRAP® is an evidence-based system used worldwide to manage both physical and mental health.

A SWELL Plan is a useful tool for discussions about the needs and adjustments a member of staff might use. You can use the SWELL Plan to record and evaluate the adjustments and support put in place for a member of staff.

The SWELL Plan is confidential, and it should be reviewed regularly. Only information related to the staff member's role and the workplace should be provided. A template can be found under disability support for staff on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion website.

Workplace (reasonable) adjustments

Workplace adjustments (also known by the legal term: reasonable adjustments) is the term for any adaptation made in the workplace to ensure equal access and opportunity for a disabled person.

Adjustments should empower a disabled member of staff and prevent any disadvantage compared to non-disabled colleagues. Workplace adjustments can be very simple and can include adapting working arrangements or environmental aspects of the workplace. Adjustments will vary according to the nature of the disability and how it affects the member of staff's work, as well as the staff member's role at Imperial.

In some circumstances, more specific support might be necessary. Examples include:

- providing alternative equipment, such as assistive computer software or a height adjustable desk;
- a flexible working, working from home arrangements and other remote working arrangements
- providing quiet locations away from distractions
- changes to the workplace or physical environment to improve accessibility;
- alterations to duties, working routines or hours;
- reallocation of minor duties or tasks to another member of staff;
- the services of a support worker, such as a personal assistant or sign-language interpreter;
- providing written materials in accessible formats for smart phones or tablet readers;
- agreeing time off or a flexi-time arrangement to enable the person to attend medical treatments;
- training or coaching to help acquire new skills or ways of working;
- travel arrangements to and from work;
- car parking facilities.

A list of example workplace adjustments that can support members of staff with particular disabilities is included in Appendix 2.

Not all disabled members of staff will require workplace adjustments to carry out their role. However, before any decisions are made, you should talk to the member of staff about their needs, how to carry out their role, and their

preferred style of working. The member of staff should lead this discussion.

When you are discussing whether adjustments are appropriate for a member of staff, it is important to ask them what they would like colleagues to know about their disabilities and any adjustments put in place. You should also ask the member of staff how they would like this information to be communicated.

For extra support regarding workplace adjustments you can fill out the workplace adjustments form on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre website.

Fire Safety

Imperial has a legal responsibility to put in place measures to ensure the safe evacuation of people from its buildings, regardless of their usage. With a disabled member of staff, you should develop a Personal Emergency Egress Plan – known as a PEEP – that describes how they should exit a building safely during an emergency. You may need advice from the Fire Safety Office, Occupational Health and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre to develop the PEEP.

Find out more

Workplace adjustments form

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/disability/workplace-adjustments

Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP)

www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/health-and-safety/fire-safety/peeps

Leave for attending appointments and sickness absence

When a member of staff needs to attend an appointment related to their disability, this should normally be arranged outside their regular working hours. However, this may not always be possible due to clinic opening times and referral processes.

In line with the College Sickness Absence Policy, where appointments are for a half day or longer, staff will need to request time off in TeamSeer, which will require their manager's approval. Appointments for less than a half day should be agreed with managers outside of TeamSeer

Examples of appointments that members of staff can attend in working hours include:

- hospital appointments of any kind;
- hearing aid tests;
- adjustment, repair or replacement for any aids used by the member of staff;
- training with a guide dog or hearing dog;
- counselling or therapeutic treatment;
- complementary therapy related to the disability;

- regular medical treatments related to the disability, such as dialysis or blood transfusions;
- chemotherapy and subsequent recovery;
- any other clinical or disability-related referrals that are ongoing.

If you need further advice about leave for attending appointments, contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre or the Staff Hub.

Find out more

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-centre

Human Resources Staff Hub

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/contact-us/hr-staff-hub

Log in to TeamSeer

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/hr-systems/absence/

Managing leave for attending appointments

Imperial's Sickness Absence Policy and online guidance resources provide a comprehensive framework for managing long and short-term sickness.

When a member of staff comes back to work after a period of sickness absence, you should use the Return to Work form to talk about any support and ongoing treatment that they may need. It is important to remember that recovery from sickness may not be a linear process and that lapses in recovery are likely in some cases. If you need more information about managing sickness absence, you can make a referral to Occupational Health at any time.

Find out more

Sickness absence guidance for managers and staff

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/guidance/sickness

Occupational Health

www.imperial.ac.uk/occupational-health



Confidentiality

In line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you must respect the confidentiality of the member of staff at all times. However, some members of your team may need to be aware of their colleague's disability, particularly in situations where workplace adjustments will affect other members of the team, or where it can be useful for the team to have an understanding of their colleague's condition.

As part of the SWELL Plan, you should talk to the member of staff about which of their colleagues can be told about their disability and decide who will tell them, how and when.

If you are concerned that there may be a serious risk of harm (to the member of staff or to other colleagues) by not sharing information about a member of staff's disability, then it may be necessary to inform Human Resources or the Safety Department, even if the staff member did not agree to this.

For example, members of staff with long-term conditions such as epilepsy or diabetes, may be more vulnerable in labs and when undertaking lone working, leading to a potentially very dangerous situation in terms of their health and safety.

This is likely to be a very rare circumstance, so you should carefully consider the situation and seek advice from Human Resources, Occupational Health and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre before taking any action.

Find out more

GDPR

www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/information-governance/data-protection/gdpr

Safety Department

www.imperial.ac.uk/safety



Recruitment

As a disability confident leader, Imperial is committed to actively attracting and recruiting disabled people and providing an inclusive and accessible recruitment process.

This means that we:

- offer an interview to disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the job;
- are flexible when assessing people, to allow disabled applicants the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job;
- make reasonable adjustments as required during the recruitment process.

When you are recruiting new staff, you should read the advice about workplace adjustments in Imperial's Recruitment and Selection Policy on the Human Resources website.

You should always provide information about the recruitment in an alternative format if an applicant asks for it. If you need help with providing alternative formats, contact the Recruitment Administrator who is helping you with the recruitment.

Disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential criteria for a job must be short-listed for interview. As a line manager, you must make sure that you give all applicants information about the format of the interview and provide them with the opportunity to tell you about any particular adjustments they might need. For example, an applicant with a speech impairment might ask for extra time to give a presentation. You should meet all reasonable requests from applicants.

If the successful candidate raises queries about workplace adjustments, it is best to get advice from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre or Occupational Health at the very earliest opportunity to ensure appropriate support and adjustments are in place from their start date. New employees may also benefit from Access to Work funding.

Find out more

Recruitment and Selection Policy

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/recruiting-staff/recruitment-and-selection-procedure/policy



Financial funding

There are two sources of funding for members of staff which can cover the cost of workplace assessments or specialist equipment and training.

Funding for specialist workplace assessments

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre will cover the cost of specialist workplace assessments, such as hearing, visual and dyslexia Work Needs Assessments (WNAs). The member of staff's department should pay for any equipment training or coaching recommended by these assessments.

Access to Work

Access to Work is a scheme sponsored by the Department of Work and Pensions that provides grants of over £1,000 to buy equipment or training for disabled members of staff. The scheme may also be able to help fund travel costs for members of staff who are unable to use public transport or pay for a support worker. The scheme includes those with mental health conditions and neurodiverse conditions (including dyslexia, dyspraxia etc).

Equipment and training

Access to Work will assess the member of staff and may award a grant based on their needs. Their assessor may contact you as a line manager for information about the member of staff's work or visit the workplace to assess access or ergonomic issues.

If needed, Access to Work can arrange for an assistive technology specialist or other specialist adviser to assess the member of staff's needs.

Access to Work will cover 100 per cent of costs for equipment or training if the member of staff applies for the scheme before they start work or within their first six weeks of working at Imperial. For applications made later, costs will be shared with the staff member's department. New members of staff who need adjustments that will incur a cost are encouraged to apply for Access to Work as soon as possible after accepting a job offer.

If Access to Work agrees to cover the cost of workplace adjustments, the member of staff's department should purchase the equipment or service from the provider recommended. The cost can then be reclaimed from Access to Work via the claim form. The member of staff's department is responsible for processing the reclaim.

Travel costs

Access to Work can provide funding for members of staff who are unable to use public transport due to their disability. As with equipment and training, if Access to Work agrees to cover the cost, as a workplace adjustment, travel costs can be paid by the staff member's department. The department can then reclaim the cost from Access to Work via the claim form.

If a funding arrangement cannot be agreed with the department, then the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre may be able to provide funding (up to £3,000 per claim per year) for staff unable to use public transport. Claims will be processed depending on resources available, and the Equality, Diversity

and Inclusion Centre will then reclaim costs from Access to Work.

If you have any funding queries about travel costs, then please contact the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre at equality@imperial.ac.uk

The disabled member of staff is responsible for making sure the Access to Work claim form is complete and includes as the reference the budget code provided by their department or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre. The claim form must be submitted to Access to Work each month to allow the staff member's department or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre to reclaim the funds.

Once the claim form has been submitted, the member of staff must notify their department or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre of the date posted and the amount claimed for the month. Emails regarding claim submissions for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre should be sent to Kalpna Mistry at k.mistry@imperial.ac.uk and Gabriella Kerr-Gordon at g.kerr-gordon@imperial.ac.uk

The member of staff must update their department or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre about any changes regarding travel, Access to Work funding, or periods away from work, including annual leave of two weeks or more.

If responsible for reclaiming costs, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre may contact the staff member's line manager, or nominated person, where there has been no use of taxis for two months or more, and all attempts to contact the staff member have been unsuccessful. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre may also in this situation cease funding travel costs due to lack of usage, and will notify the staff member and their line manager of this.

Usage of taxis should be reviewed every term. If additional funds are required, the member of staff should contact their department or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre as soon as possible.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre will not fund taxis to work for accidents and short-term injuries that do not meet the Access to Work guidelines.

How to apply for Access to Work

The disabled member of staff must apply to Access to Work directly; Imperial cannot apply on their behalf. More information about the scheme and how to apply is available on the Access to Work website: www.gov.uk/access-to-work



Staff with carer's responsibility

Some members of staff may care for someone who is disabled. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre offers advice and support for members of staff in this situation.

Members of staff caring for a disabled child are entitled to a total of 18 weeks' leave that can be taken up until the child's eighteenth birthday.

The College's Flexible Working, Special Leave and Family Leave policies can help support members of staff who care for a disabled dependant. A disabled dependant could be a partner, adult child or parent, or for example, an elderly family member.

Find out more

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-centre

Flexible working guidance

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/guidance/flexible

Special leave guidance

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/guidance/special

Family leave guidance

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/procedures/family

Appendix 1: Examples of disabilities

A disability is any condition that impairs a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activity. The definition includes (this list is not exhaustive):

- sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing (some visual impairments are automatically deemed to be a disability);
- physical impairments or illnesses that affect mobility, dexterity or control of movement e.g. prolonged use of a wheelchair or crutches, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, stroke;
- neurodiverse conditions, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or autistic spectrum disorders (ASD);
- progressive diseases, such as motor neurone disease, muscular dystrophy, forms of dementia and lupus;
- illnesses with impairments with fluctuating or recurring effects such as multiple sclerosis (MS), myalgic encephalitis (ME), chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), sickle cell anaemia, epilepsy and diabetes;
- mental health conditions and mental illnesses, e.g. neurosis such as depression, phobic anxiety, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, as well as personality disorders and some self-harming behaviours. Psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders.
- HIV infection from the point of diagnosis even where there is no adverse effect on day-to-day living;
- cancer from the point of diagnosis even where there is no adverse effect on day-to-day living;
- other long-term illnesses that significantly impairs a person's ability to function, physically and/or mentally. This can be due to the effects of the illness or the effects or demands of treatment for example needing to attend hospital or taking debilitating or time-consuming treatment;
- facial disfigurements.

Some specific impairments excluded from the definition of disability, but which could be relevant in employment include:

- addictions, other than as a result of the substance being medically prescribed, for example alcoholism, drug dependency or smoking addiction;
- deliberately inflicted disfigurements for the purpose of adornment, such as tattoos which have not been removed, skin piercing, and something attached through such piercing;
- seasonal allergic rhinitis (hay fever), except where it aggravates the effect of another impairment such as unstable asthma, or severe chronic irreversible airflow limitation;
- problems with standard vision, corrected by contact lenses or spectacle.

Appendix 2: Examples of workplace adjustments

Disability	Area of consideration for line manager and/or team	Possible adjustment
Anxiety	Travel in rush hour in crowded conditions.	Allow flexible working to enable staff member to avoid peak periods.
Autism spectrum	Team member understanding the culture and social norms of the office.	Assign a 'buddy' to help and explain office culture and norms. Explore the option of a mentor.
Depression	Early shifts or working patterns, which could be a problem at certain points or time in the year.	Adjust shifts or working hours to start later where possible, for example starting at 10.00, as opposed to 8.00, with a later finish time.
Dyslexia	In certain cases typing agendas, minutes and papers.	Record audio of certain meetings and install specialist software to help with reading and writing tasks.
Photosensitive epilepsy	Flashing or flickering lights can trigger seizures.	Replace older computer monitors which may trigger seizures. Ensure all lights are in good working condition and do not flicker. Inform member of staff if flash photography will take place.
Hearing impairment	Feeling included in the team and being able to participate fully in meetings.	Ensure all team members have hearing impairment training. Support the member of staff with appropriate technology and ask whether they would like a BSL interpreter at meetings, if needed.
Lupus	Being present at work in the case of flare-ups of pain or during treatment.	Allow flexible working or working from home to help with recovery.
Severe back pain	Sitting or standing for long periods.	Full ergonomic assessment of desk or working area and duties. A height adjustable desk may be needed, as well as regular standing or rest breaks.
Visual impairment	Having access to information at the same time as other members of the team.	Use JAWS or Claro screen reading software with dictation tools like Dragon. Provide minutes and papers in advance, in a suitable format for the appropriate software reader. Find out what format the staff member prefers in terms of hard-copy format (for example Braille or large print)

Useful contacts

Human Resources (HR)

The HR Staff Hub can provide advice about how to put in place adjustments, particularly where these might require alterations to a member of staff's job or hours of work. They can also advise on workplace adjustments and how best to sensitively introduce any adjustments that are needed.

www.imperial.ac.uk/human-resources/contact-us/hr-staff-hub

Occupational Health

The Occupational Health team provide services to protect health at work, as well as assessing and advising on fitness for work. They also ensure that health issues are managed effectively and can provide advice about adjustments that can support a member of staff with an acute illness or who is experiencing an exacerbation of an active medical condition.

With their agreement, you can also refer a member of staff for an assessment by the Occupational Health team. An Occupational Health Adviser will meet with the member of staff to undertake a functional assessment of their needs and report on their recommendations for reasonable adjustments. The release of an Occupational Health report is subject to the member of staff's consent.

Occupational Health Advisers also work alongside the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre to provide workplace assessments and to give advice about adaptations to office furniture and computer

workstations. Occupational Health also have a limited range of office chairs, computer keyboards and input devices that members of staff can try at work.

www.imperial.ac.uk/occupational-health

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre

The team at the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Centre can help you to find specialist assessors, share advice about appropriate software for data inputting and screen reading, and offer guidance about developing and implementing policies.

The team also arranges and delivers training for staff and supports positive action initiatives like Disability Confident.

You can also talk to the Centre's trained Disability Advisors, who can provide additional support and advice.

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/support-for-staff/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-centre

Building managers

If any physical alterations are needed to rooms or buildings to help with accessibility, you should discuss this with your building manager.

www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/about-us/our-teams/buildings-managers

Fire Safety

With a disabled member of staff, you should develop a Personal Emergency Egress Plan – known

as a PEEP – that describes how they should exit a building safely during an emergency. You may need advice from the Fire Safety Office to develop the PEEP.

www.imperial.ac.uk/estates-facilities/about-us/contact-us

Able@Imperial

Able@Imperial is the College's network for disabled staff, staff with disabled dependents and staff who have an interest in disability in the workplace.

www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/staff-networks/able-at-imperial

Confidential Care

Confidential Care offers free professional and confidential help and advice to all members of staff and members of their family who live with them. The Confidential Care helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staff can also arrange to speak with or meet with a qualified counsellor.

www.imperial.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/advice-and-support/confidential-care

www.imperial.ac.uk