



# Disability Matters

**Information for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties**



This document is available in a range of formats.

**If you require this document in another format please call 020 8326 2103.**

# Contents

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## *Page number*

Does this booklet apply to me? .....	2
What is the college policy on disability? .....	2
Who do I contact for information? .....	3
What are my rights as a disabled student? .....	4
How should I tell the college about the support or adjustments I need? .....	5-6
What kind of support could I have? .....	7-9
Support staff .....	9
What equipment is available? .....	10
Learning support and study skills .....	11
The Student Counselling Service .....	11
The Supported Learning Department .....	12-13
Project SEARCH .....	14-15
Can I get help to arrange transport? .....	16
Is the college accessible? .....	17-18
What happens if I go on work experience? .....	19
What arrangements can be made for exams and assessments? .....	20
Money and funding for students with disabilities .....	21-22
Finance for higher education students .....	23
Trusts and charitable support .....	24
What do I do if I have a complaint to make? .....	24

## *Forms for your use*

Request for an appointment with the Head of Inclusion .....	26
Application for exam adjustments .....	28
What do you think of this disability booklet? .....	30

## **Does this booklet apply to me?**

The information in this booklet may apply to people who:

- have a learning difficulty and/or disability
- have a specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia
- have a medical condition, e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, ME, etc.
- have a physical disability
- are neurodivergent
- are deaf or have a hearing difficulty
- are blind or partially sighted
- find communicating or remembering difficult
- have a mental health difficulty including anxiety
- have a temporary disability after an illness or an accident.

If you would like to receive support from the college but are not sure if your needs relate to the examples above, please contact the Head of Inclusion or the CQTM for Supported Learning for advice (see page 3 for contact details).

## **What is the college policy on disability?**

The college believes that all students should be treated fairly, and aims to ensure that all students are able to access, participate and progress within their chosen learning programme. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that college facilities are accessible to all people and that the learning needs of all students are met.

The college has an Equality and Diversity Policy with parts that are relevant to disability. This is available on the college website.

## **Who do I contact for information?**

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The staff with special responsibility for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are:

Ann Tucker, Head of Inclusion

Tel 020 8326 2103

Email: [ann.tucker@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:ann.tucker@west-thames.ac.uk)

Alison McLoughlin, Inclusion Manager

Tel 020 8326 2090

Email: [alison.mcloughlin@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:alison.mcloughlin@west-thames.ac.uk)

Parminder Aujla, Curriculum Administrator – Inclusion

Tel 020 8326 2218

Email: [parminder.aujla@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:parminder.aujla@west-thames.ac.uk)

Lia Fernandez (Dyslexia Co-ordinator), Curriculum Leader – Learning Support

Tel 020 8326 2228

Email: [lia.fernandez@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:lia.fernandez@west-thames.ac.uk)

Jane Pendrey, CQTM for SLDD

(contact for students on supported learning programmes)

Tel 020 8326 6301

Email: [jane.pendrey@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:jane.pendrey@west-thames.ac.uk)

Martina Greeves, Head of Careers and Work Placement

Tel 020 8326 6422

Email: [martina.greeves@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:martina.greeves@west-thames.ac.uk)

## **What are my rights as a disabled student?**

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The Equality Act 2010 outlines the law relating to disabled people and education. Under this law the college is required to ensure that:

- you are not treated less favourably than other students
- you are provided with reasonable adjustments to avoid disadvantage
- you are provided with appropriate support aids and services
- you are not substantially disadvantaged by our physical premises.

## **How should I tell the college about the support or adjustments I need?**

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### **If you are a new applicant or a new student**

All disabled students are required to contact the to meet the Head of Inclusion or a member of the Inclusion team and discuss their support needs prior to enrolment in order to determine whether these needs can be met.

#### *When you apply*

When you apply to come to college you should fill in the section on the application form asking about support. This will let us know that we need to speak with you to discuss support and/or adjustments.

If you have substantial support requirements you will need to give us a copy of your Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) supplied by your local authority.

We will clarify with you whether you have discussed your support needs with the Inclusion Team at the end of your interview.

You can bring a family member, carer or advocate to this meeting with you.

#### *At enrolment*

If you haven't told us about your support needs or adjustments by the time you come to enrol, you can let us know at enrolment by completing the *Additional Support* section on the enrolment form and by asking to see the Inclusion Team.

#### *When you start*

You can also tell us about your support or adjustment needs at any time after you have started college. If you would like to speak to someone after you have enrolled you can contact any of the staff listed on page 3, as well as your student learning adviser or student services who will advise you of what to do.

*(continued on next page)*

## **If you are a returning student**

If you are re-enrolling you will have the opportunity on the re-enrolment form to tell us about any support needs or adjustments you require for the new term.

If you have not told us of any needs when you re-enrol, you can tell us at any time by contacting any of the people listed on page 3.

## **If you are an HND applicant or student**

If you are applying for an HND you can provide information regarding your disability and or/learning difficulty on the UCAS form. When we receive your UCAS form we will invite you to come and discuss your support needs or adjustment requirements with curriculum teams.

Higher education students can also apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to cover some of the extra costs you have because of a mental health problem, long term illness or any other disability. For more information, please see page 23.



## **What kind of support could I have?**

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The type of support available will depend on your individual needs. Some examples of support and adjustments you could receive are listed below.

### **If you are visually impaired:**

- Time and support to get used to the site
- A sighted guide or support assistant
- A reader and scribe for class work and exams
- Materials in large print, Braille or audio format
- Course materials in advance
- Extra time to complete work and assignments
- Assistive technology and software
- Description of visual information and props.

### **If you have speech or language difficulties:**

- A support assistant to aid with communication
- A communication board or assistive technology
- Modified assessment arrangements and extra time for any presentations or group work.

### **If you have a physical disability:**

- A practical assistant to support you with physical tasks
- Escort support to help you get around the building in the initial months of your course
- Adapted furniture
- Equipment to record lectures
- A scribe or note-taker
- Extra time for coursework and exams
- Adapted computer equipment
- A parking space.

**If you have a hearing impairment:**

- A communication support worker or sign language interpreter
- Additional learning support, e.g. for literacy and concept support
- A personal converser and induction loops
- Extra time for assessments and examinations
- Videos with subtitles or transcripts
- A note-taker.

**If you have a medical condition (this may include diabetes, epilepsy, sickle cell anaemia, ME, sleep disorders, etc):**

- Alternative arrangements for work and deadlines if fatigued, stressed or effects of medication are an issue
- Equipment to record lectures
- A room to rest whilst on campus
- Facilitate a plan for medical support and emergency arrangements with other curriculum and other professionals, where required.
- Ongoing communication with staff regarding your condition and how it is affecting you
- Contact from staff during any periods of absence
- Flexibility in punctuality and attendance if treatments or therapies are tightly scheduled
- Specialist equipment or technology.

**If you have a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia:**

- Additional learning support sessions, e.g. for structuring work
- Computer software or a portable reading pen to help with reading and writing
- Handouts and exam papers in a preferred format, e.g. on coloured paper, or a different font
- Extended library loan periods
- Extra time to complete coursework and assessments
- Coloured overlays
- A scribe, reader or support assistant for exams.



### **If you have a mental health difficulty :**

- Timetable planning to help deal with stress
- Extra support and help with planning during stressful periods (e.g. exams)
- Support from the student counselling service
- Flexibility in attendance and punctuality during times when difficulties are more present.
- Contact from staff during any periods of absence
- Staff to receive information about your difficulty to avoid misconceptions
- A room to rest and take time out on campus.

### **If you have a learning disability:**

- Materials presented in plain English or with symbols
- Additional learning support sessions, e.g. to understand assignments and put together answers
- Extra time for coursework and exams
- A support assistant in lessons
- Specific tasks and any changes explained clearly
- Extended library loan periods.

### **If you have ASD or neurodiversity diagnosis:**

- Opportunity to familiarise yourself with the college and your department before the start of term.
- A support assistant
- Additional learning support sessions, e.g. to help with language skills or structuring work
- Equipment to record lectures
- Extra time to read, understand and answer questions and exams
- Have information conveyed in more than one way (e.g. spoken and written down)
- Preparation for any changes to your college timetable or routine

## **Support Staff**

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The college employs a team of support assistants who support students within the classroom, at lunch times (where applicable) or for personal care. They work across the college providing in class support, 1:1 support when needed, mentoring sessions and study skills workshops for students.

## **What equipment is available?**

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We have a large amount of equipment and technology at the college to assist students. Many of these resources can be loaned out to individual students, whilst other items are based on site for use by all students.

An example of some of the equipment available is listed below.

- A range of different keyboards and key guards
- Scanning/reading pens for literacy difficulties
- A range of mice (roller ball, joystick, glide point etc)
- Recording devices and transcribers
- Large key and talking scientific calculators
- CCTV magnifiers, compact video magnifiers and magnifying glass
- Predictive text software
- Laptops
- Non-slip mats
- Personal conversers and portable induction loops
- Adjustable height tables
- Screen reading, voice recognition and magnification software
- Mind-mapping software
- Reading, writing and dyslexia support software
- Large screen monitors
- Electronic spellcheckers/thesaurus
- Coloured overlays and pen grips.

If you require a particular piece of equipment which is not listed above, please contact the Inclusion Team (see contact details on page 3), who will make every effort to ensure you have the equipment you need.

## **Learning support and study skills**

Learning support is available to students who need some extra help with their literacy, numeracy, language and general study skills in order to succeed at college.

Students can receive help with the following:

- reading and writing
- number skills
- spelling and grammar
- understanding assignments
- planning, organising and structuring coursework
- memory and revision strategies
- note-taking skills
- strategies for specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

If you require learning support or if you have needs relating to dyslexia/dyscalculia, you can speak to Lia Fernandez (see page 3 for contact details) and she will arrange the appropriate sessions for you.

## **The Student Counselling Service**

The Student Counselling Service is a free and confidential service available to all students enrolled at West Thames College. It is available 5 days a week at the Isleworth campus and on Wednesday mornings at the Feltham Skills Centre.

To make an appointment either drop by Room A003 (in the student common room), phone 020 8326 2484 or leave a message in the post box outside the counsellors' office. Alternatively, you can just drop in for a chat or ask a member of staff to arrange an appointment on your behalf.

A leaflet providing information about the Student Counselling Service is available in the student common room.

# **The Supported Learning Department**

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## **Skills Builder (Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3 and Level 1)**

These courses are designed for young people with mild to severe learning disability who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). These courses are individually designed to help students achieve their potential, both educationally and socially, and make the transition to a mainstream vocational course, training or employment. Students are encouraged to develop personal and vocational skills with the support of a tutor and specialist support assistants. Students study three main vocational pathways in catering and hospitality, gardening and horticulture and business and ICT alongside English and maths.

## **Skills Towards Greater Independence (RARPA) Continuing Education Programme (towards Entry Level 1)**

For students with severe to profound and multiple learning disabilities who have left school and would benefit from a college education within small groups. The curriculum is based around the development of communication and life skills, but also encourages the development of social awareness. The focus is on student independence and the ability to make decisions and choices. Students have a tutor, specialist support assistants and specialist support assistants.

## **Support for our Learners**

All courses have built in support according to the needs of the group and staff provide additional help during break and lunch times as well as helping with personal care where required. Support staff also offer additional guidance and encouragement in group sessions. The college has a wide range of facilities which are all accessible to the students. The transition from Supported Learning to a mainstream vocational course, training or employment is carefully planned and supported.



## **Project SEARCH**

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*“Project SEARCH offers refreshing solutions for young people with disabilities transitioning from school to work and can help meet both students’ as well as employers’ needs.”*

This programme is designed for young people with learning disabilities in their last year of full-time education. The students are based at Hounslow Civic Centre, The Marriott Hotel in Twickenham and Thorpe Park. The students will divide their day/week between studying for a City & Guilds qualification in Employability, Planning for Life and Work and gaining work experience. They are placed in a number of job rotations including reception, IT, gym, restaurant and procurement.

For their studies the students are based in a classroom with a full-time tutor employed by West Thames College. They are also supported by a full-time job coach.

Project SEARCH was founded in the US in 1996. There are approximately 250 projects in five countries – US, Canada, UK, Australia and Ireland. The aim of the project is to assist young people with learning disabilities with their transition from education to the world of work. In the UK host employers have been public sector organisations and most are healthcare providers. GSK is the first UK private sector employer to host Project SEARCH.

### **Eligibility criteria:**

- Must have learning disability and have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Age 17-24
- Want to work
- Potential to develop skills and work required to meet business needs at GSK
- Commit to 5 day per week programme
- Family or network supportive of applicant going to work
- Be an independent traveller or be undertaking travel training



## **Can I get help to arrange transport?**

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If public transport is not accessible to you, you may be eligible to receive transport to and from college through your local authority. You will need to contact your local authority and request a school transport application form.

## **Is the college accessible?**

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### **Physical access**

Almost all of the college is accessible by wheelchair users and all classrooms and student areas are accessible. If necessary, most classes can be moved to more suitable locations near a lift or accessible toilet if required.

The college also has a range of accessible bathrooms, with hoists and transfer aids available and staff who have training in providing such care.





## **Signage and maps**

Where a main route or entrance is not accessible, alternative accessible routes are signposted. All lifts are signposted with details of the nearest alternative lift so you know where to go if a lift is not working for any reason.

You will also find clear signage across the college and particularly at the entrance to each block, giving details of the departments and rooms that are housed in each area.

## **Furniture and equipment**

A range of equipment and furniture is available across the college (such as adjustable height desks), which can be placed where you require them. In addition, key student areas such as the library and IT drop-in also have furniture and equipment permanently available to allow access to resources. If you have any access difficulties, please contact the Head of Inclusion to arrange any adjustments you require.

## **Car parking**

The college has car parking facilities at both sites with spaces reserved for disabled motorists.

## **Emergency evacuation**

If you are not able to access stairs, have difficulty hearing the emergency alarm, or if you require assistance to exit the building in an emergency you must have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan. This plan is called a PEEP and will be carried out by your SLA when you start college.

## **What happens if I go on work experience?**

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If your course has a work experience module, it is important that the Employability Coach knows about your support needs or any adjustments you may require for your work placement.

If you have already met with the Head of Inclusion to discuss your needs in college, you will have been asked for your permission for this information to be passed on to the Employability Coach already.

The college may provide a support worker for the duration of a work placement if this is required, as well as the loan of some equipment or aids that

you may need. A support worker can also check out employers' facilities and access arrangements in advance to ensure that the placement is accessible for your needs. We can also advise employers on suitable adjustments if these are required.

If you have not told the college about any needs because it is not relevant to your course, but you think it might be relevant for work experience, you should contact the Head of Inclusion or your student learning adviser (SLA).

As it can often take a long time to find a suitable placement, it is important that the Head of Inclusion or your student learning adviser knows about your needs as soon as possible.

## **What arrangements can be made for exams and assessments?**

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Some learners may be able to have additional arrangements and support to enable them to take part and perform to their best in examinations and assessments.

### **Arrangements include:**

- Separate room
- Use of a computer
- Extra time
- Large print or coloured question paper
- BSL interpretation
- Reader
- Scribe
- Prompter
- Supervised rest breaks.

If you think you will need exam arrangements to be made, it is your responsibility to let the college know when you start your course.

**Please note that you will need to supply evidence from medical professionals and psychologists – e.g. Education and Health Care Plan, Educational Psychologist’s report, Form 8 from your previous school or WRATs test that is in date, clearly states the required arrangement and supports your normal way of working. Please be aware that it can take up to 3 months for exam arrangements to be agreed so if you leave it until just before your exams it will be too late!**

The best way to let us know is to complete the form on page 25 (called *Application for exam adjustments – Students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties*), tear it off and take it to the Exams window. Spare copies of this form are available from the Exams Office.

You should also make sure you speak with your tutor so that you know what type of exam you have and what arrangements you will need.

If you have already met with the Head of Inclusion to discuss your needs in college, you will have been asked for your permission for this information to be passed on to the Exams Office already.

If you have not told anyone about your needs, or if you want to make sure that appropriate exam arrangements are being made, you should speak to your SLA.

# **Money and funding for disabled students**

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## **Do I have to pay fees?**

Information on whether or not you have to pay fees, or if you are able to have reduced fees, can be found in the college prospectus. If you read this and have still have some questions, you can contact the Information Centre.

Please remember that Personal Independence Payments (PIP) is not a means tested benefit and therefore does not entitle you to have reduced fees on its own.

## **Who pays for my support/adjustments?**

The college normally receives money from local authorities or our funding body to pay for additional support needed by disabled students (who are not on higher education courses). The college can use these funds to provide the types of support described on pages 7-10. Therefore, you can generally expect your disability-related needs to be met by the college.

If you are studying on a **full cost course** or you are an **international student**, you are expected to cover all your learning costs. As the college does not receive

any funding for these courses, there may be limits to the type of support we can provide.

Of course, many adjustments will cost very little or no money at all and the college will make all efforts to ensure that this type of support is in place. However, if the support you require is likely to be expensive, the college may not be able to meet these needs. If we cannot pay for the support you require, you may be able to apply for some support from charitable trusts (see page 23).



## **Who owns the equipment that I need?**

If you require a particular piece of equipment (e.g. a laptop etc) we will supply this for use at the college. However, the equipment will still belong to the college and would not be yours to keep at home. You will need to return this equipment when you leave your course.

If you require specialist equipment to use at home you can apply to a charitable trust to pay for this (see page 22).

## **Learner Support Funds**

Learner Support Funds are available from the college to help with various expenses. This might be to help you pay for transport to go on a trip, books and equipment, and many other things.

If you need help paying for the items you need, you should contact Student Services for more information and help with applying.

## **Finance for higher education students**

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### **Disabled Students' Allowance**

If you are studying on a **higher education** course you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) help you pay for extra costs you have on your course because of your disability. You can get the allowances on top of your other student finance. You will not need to repay DSAs.

How much you get depends on your individual needs – not your household income.

You can get help with the costs of:

- specialist equipment, for example a computer if you need one because of your disability or your current one does not meet your study needs
- non-medical helpers
- extra travel because of your disability
- other disability-related costs of studying.

DSAs do not cover disability-related costs you'd have if you were not attending a course, or costs that any student might have.

For more information on DSAs and how to apply, please see:

[www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas)

HE students should apply for loans, grants and extra help from Student Finance England:

[www.gov.uk/student-finance](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance)

Further information is available on the UCAS website:

[www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support](http://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/finance-and-support)

## **Trusts and charitable support**

Some national and local organisations offer grants to students who have a particular disability or who are studying a particular course. These grants may be available to help pay for equipment, transport, fees, books, living costs, etc.

If you want more information on charitable trusts and how to apply, you can contact the Student Services.

## **What do I do if I have a complaint to make?**

If you have a complaint or feel that the college is not doing what it says in this booklet, there is a formal college complaints procedure.

If your complaint is about disability discrimination or the support you are receiving please discuss this with the Head of Inclusion first, who is there to investigate and address your concerns.

If you have done this and are still not happy, you can make a formal complaint.

The student booklet explains how to go about making a complaint. You will need to fill in a form to do this. If you need some help to fill in this form or to put your complaint down in writing, you can ask any member of staff to help you do this.

# Notes

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## Request for an appointment with the Head of Inclusion

You can contact the Head of Inclusion by using the contact details on page 3 of this booklet. Alternatively you can complete the form below and return it to the college for an appointment.

**I have read the Disability Matters booklet and would like to make an appointment to discuss (please tick):**

- My support, adjustment or equipment needs
- The Disability Forum Group
- An application for Disabled Students Allowance
- Transport
- Exam adjustments
- Work experience
- Additional learning support
- More information/advice on another issue.

Name:

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Student ID number:

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Course:

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Student Learning Adviser:

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Phone/mobile number:

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Email:

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**Please send this page by Freepost (you don't need a stamp) to:**

Head of Inclusion  
West Thames College  
Freepost Plus RTJX-LSAT-GYJR  
Isleworth, Middlesex  
TW7 4HS

or email your request to [ann.tucker@west-thames.ac.uk](mailto:ann.tucker@west-thames.ac.uk).







## **Application for exam adjustments – Students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties**

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In order for us to apply to the exam board(s) for adjustments, we need at least **three months' notice** plus the following information:

Student's full name:

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Student ID number:

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Nature of disability/learning difficulty:

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Tutor's name:

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Do you attend learning support?  Yes  No

Do you wish see the Head of Inclusion?  Yes  No

### **Exam adjustments requested by student (please tick as required):**

- Enlarged/modified papers
- Rest breaks
- Use of PC or laptop
- Voice output or voice activated software
- Extra time (up to 25%)
- Extra time (over 25% – medical evidence required)
- Prompter
- Reader
- Scribe
- Practical assistant
- Sign language interpreter
- Bilingual dictionary
- Separate room

*(continued on next page)*



Any other exam adjustments?

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Is this your normal way of working?

Yes

No

**Please note that exam boards require proof of medical needs and up to date assessments of learning difficulties by authorised professionals – e.g. Education and Health Care Plan, Educational Psychologist’s report, Form 8 from your previous school or WRATs test. You must provide evidence BEFORE the college can apply to exam boards.**

Thank you for your help. We will write to you to let you know what the exam boards will allow.

**West Thames College Exams Team  
020 8326 2132**



**The information in this document is produced in accordance with the Education (Disability Statements for Further Education Institutions) Regulations 1996.**

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