

**General  
Chiropractic  
Council**



**Protecting patients  
Setting standards**

# Becoming a chiropractor

## *A guide for disabled people*

August 2010

*plain English  
approved*  
by the word centre

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## Who is this document for?

“ I have a disability; can I become a chiropractor? ”

“ My course has received an application from someone with a disability. Will they be able to finish the course? If they do, can they practise as a chiropractor? ”

The quotes above summarise why we have written this document. It aims to give more information about how someone with a disability might become a chiropractor.

You may find this document useful if you are:

- a) a disabled person who is considering becoming a chiropractor
  - b) a careers advisor, teacher or lecturer who gives advice on career options and related education and training
- or
- c) someone working on a recognised chiropractic degree programme (for example, admissions staff, academic and clinical staff, and disability support staff).

This is not a full list, but it should give you some idea of whether this document will meet your needs.

# About the structure of this document

We have put all the relevant information about disabled students into this one document to make our role and our processes as clear as possible.

The *Introduction* contains information about us, the General Chiropractic Council, our standards and what we do.

*Information for people applying to join a chiropractic degree programme* is aimed at disabled people who may be thinking of becoming a chiropractor and the people who advise and support them. It should also be useful for teachers, parents and careers advisors. In this section, 'you' means a disabled person who wants to become a chiropractor.

*Information for admissions staff* has guidance about the responsibilities of education providers and employers as well as our responsibilities. It should also be useful for academic, clinical and disability support staff. In this section, 'you' means staff working for education providers.

*Extra information* has advice about 'reasonable adjustments' under the Equality Act, finding out more from other organisations and a glossary.

If you have any questions about the issues this document looks at, you may find it useful to read the whole document to understand what we do and how it may affect you.

# Introduction

## About us

1. We are the General Chiropractic Council (GCC). We are a healthcare professional regulator, and we were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of chiropractors. To be on the register, a chiropractor has to be:
  - a) of good character
  - b) in good health, both physically and mentally
  - c) properly qualified
  - d) properly insured.
2. The term 'chiropractor' is a 'protected title'. This means that anyone who uses the title of chiropractor must be on our register. Anyone who uses the title 'chiropractor' who is not registered with us is breaking the law and could be prosecuted. Our register is on our website for anyone to search so they can check that the chiropractor is registered – [www.gcc-uk.org/chiro\\_search.cfm](http://www.gcc-uk.org/chiro_search.cfm)
3. We set the standards for:
  - a) chiropractic education
  - b) personal and professional conduct
  - c) professional competence.
4. Another important part of our role is to consider any complaints we receive about chiropractors. Every complaint we receive is investigated thoroughly, to decide whether we need to hold a hearing. The hearing will examine the evidence and decide whether the chiropractor has failed to meet any of our requirements, and if so, it will decide what sanction should be applied.

## How we are run

5. We were created by a piece of legislation called the 'Chiropractors Act 1994'. This sets out the things that we must do, and it gives us our legal power. We have a council made up of members of the public and chiropractors. The council sets our strategy and policy, and makes sure that we are meeting our duties under the Chiropractors Act and all other legislation that applies.

## The Equality Act

6. The Equality Act 2010 protects disabled people from discrimination and offers remedies when people have been discriminated against. There are several parts to the Equality Act, which place different responsibilities on different kinds of organisations.
7. The Equality Act replaces existing anti-discrimination laws, including the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA). It aims to make the law more consistent, clearer and easier to follow. The Equality Act has kept key parts of the DDA and so a lot of its provisions remain the same.
8. The Equality Act has introduced new provisions, or concepts, called 'direct discrimination', 'discrimination arising from disability' and 'indirect discrimination'. Previously, protection did not extend to people who were mistakenly thought to be disabled or people who experienced discrimination because of their association with a disabled person, such as carers. These people are now protected against direct discrimination and harassment.
9. Most of the Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010, but some parts of it will come into force later. The Equality Act does not cover unlawful behaviour (discrimination, harassment and victimisation) that happened before 1 October 2010, the previous legislation will apply to this.

## Duties of education providers and employers

10. Under Part 6 of the Equality Act, education providers need to make sure disabled students and applicants are protected from discrimination in the way, for example, the providers deal with admissions, student services and awarding qualifications. Under Part 5, employers have a similar duty to employees and applicants.

## More information

11. The Government Equalities Office ([www.equalities.gov.uk](http://www.equalities.gov.uk)) has published detailed guidance, including a 'Disability Quick Start Guide', which explains the rights of disabled people and the responsibilities of different kinds of organisations. It makes clear the new rights and responsibilities that the Equality Act has introduced.
12. The Equality and Human Rights Commission ([www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)) is a statutory body that has the responsibility to protect, enforce and promote equality across the 'protected characteristics' covered by equality legislation. The equivalent body in Northern Ireland is the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

13. The seven protected characteristics listed in the DDA remain the same: age, disability, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. The Equality Act has added one more protected characteristic that applies to Higher Education Institutions: pregnancy and maternity.
14. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)<sup>1</sup> publishes information and detailed advice about the responsibilities of education providers, employers and service providers under equalities legislation.

### **What rights does the Equality Act give a disabled person?**

15. The Act gives protection from discrimination to a 'disabled person'. A disabled person is defined as someone who has a physical or mental impairment (including sensory impairment) that has an effect on his or her ability to carry out day-to-day activities. The effect must be substantial (that is, more than minor or trivial), adverse and long term (it must have lasted for more than a year or will last for the rest of the life of the person affected).

### **What is chiropractic?**

16. Chiropractic is concerned with the framework of bones and muscles that support the body (the musculoskeletal system). Some problems of the musculoskeletal system can be caused by accidents, stress, lack of exercise, poor posture, illness and everyday wear and tear.
17. The standards that the GCC has set out in its [Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency](#) apply to all chiropractors practising in the UK whatever:
  - a) their employment status (that is, whether they run their own clinic, work in a partnership, work as an associate or an employee, or work as a locum)
  - b) the environment in which they practise (that is, whether they provide chiropractic services to a local community, work as part of a multidisciplinary team, act as a sports team advisor or coach, or work in public health).
18. Almost all chiropractors in the UK are in private practice, and patients usually refer themselves to chiropractors (called 'self-referral'). Chiropractors take a full medical history and examine patients by sight and by touch, carrying out a thorough physical examination. This includes neurological and orthopaedic tests if needed.

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<sup>1</sup> See the section '[Other organisations](#)' at the end of this document for details of how to contact this and other organisations.

19. A chiropractor's first concern is to find out what is wrong. They will also check for signs of any serious conditions for which a patient would need to go to their GP or to a hospital for emergency care.
20. Chiropractic has an emphasis on manual treatments, involving precise handling or moving of parts of the body. Chiropractic is a physically and mentally demanding profession.

### Recognised degree programmes

21. UK graduates who apply to go on our register must have completed a university degree programme recognised by the GCC.
22. When a UK higher education institution wants to offer a degree in chiropractic, it must make a submission to the GCC. We will then consider the programme in detail to make sure that it meets our [Degree Recognition Criteria](#). The 'programme outcomes' set out in the criteria are designed to make sure that, when they graduate, students have demonstrated that they are able to meet all the requirements set out in our [Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency](#).
23. A panel from the GCC visits the organisation and writes a report on how the degree programme meets our criteria. Depending on the findings of this report, we will then decide whether to recognise the programme.
24. We also publish on our website the list of recognised chiropractic education providers, so that anyone who wants to become a chiropractor can find out about the programmes and decide where they would like to study.

### Applying for registration

25. Completing a recognised degree programme does not guarantee that someone will become registered as a chiropractor. But it does show us that the applicant has met the degree programme outcomes and so is eligible to apply for registration. When someone first applies to register with us, we want to see proof of their educational qualifications, and also the following information:
  - a) any criminal convictions or cautions, no matter when or where in the world the offences were committed
  - b) a health report from their doctor
  - c) details of registration with other registration bodies in the UK or elsewhere, and about any disciplinary action taken against them by such a body

- d) any allegations of professional negligence considered by a civil court
- e) proof of professional indemnity insurance
- f) a birth certificate and proof of any change of name since then (for example, a marriage certificate)
- g) a character reference.

### **Becoming a chiropractor**

- 26. The route a person takes to become a chiropractor is one with many stages, and they may come into contact with a number of organisations.
- 27. Sometimes a person may be told that they cannot become a chiropractor because they have a disability, or they may assume that this is the case. In this guide we have given the correct information about what is needed to register with us as a chiropractor. We hope this will mean that people who might previously not have considered chiropractic as a profession will be able to make an informed choice about their future career.
- 28. We, the GCC, are responsible for setting the standards of education, conduct and practice for chiropractors and for registration. In this guide you will find information about other organisations and references to some documents that we think you might find useful. However, we are not responsible for the content of documents written by others.
- 29. We have also given some examples of good and bad practice. These are here to illustrate the points we are making, not to provide set ways of doing things.

### **The differences between registration and employment**

- 30. There is a major difference between being registered as a chiropractor and being employed as a chiropractor or being able to practise as a chiropractor.
- 31. We deal with registering individual chiropractors: we do not deal with matters that are related to employment. In particular, it is important never to think of registration as a guarantee of employment. Equally, a place on an approved degree programme is not a guarantee of registration.
- 32. If we confirm that someone meets all our requirements for registration, this means they are legally entitled to practise. It is not a guarantee of the opportunity to practise. Registration does not mean that someone is fit to work, which is decided locally between the chiropractor and an employer; or in the case of self-employed people by their deciding for themselves whether they are fit and able to practise and can make a living from practising.

33. Nearly all chiropractors are self-employed; very few are employees. A survey of the profession in 2004 showed that of the 854 chiropractors who replied (there were 2,024 registered with us at the time) around 50% worked alongside other chiropractors (that is, they shared a practice), 31% worked with other complementary and alternative medicine practitioners, and 11% worked alongside medical doctors as part of their practice.
34. Some of our registrants are employed in the education field, but they usually work as a chiropractor as well – about 14% of respondents to the 2004 survey worked in both education and practice. There are very few, if any, jobs in which chiropractors use their professional knowledge and skills without directly practising chiropractic. In this sense the profession can be said to be quite flat in terms of offering alternative career opportunities.

#### Example

A young man had a motorbike accident, which resulted in him losing one of his legs below the knee. He applied for a place on a chiropractic education programme, having become interested in this work through the professionals he met following the accident.

Before offering him a place, the education provider arranged for him to have an assessment. This confirmed that he had enough control over the knee joint to be able to position his knee in a way which gave him sufficient stability and posture to meet the physical requirements of the education programme. He was offered a place and completed all the learning outcomes of the course successfully. He is now practising as a chiropractor and has his own practice.

### Meeting our standards

35. Everyone on our register must meet our *Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency*. These tell patients the quality of care they are entitled to receive from chiropractors. For chiropractors, they are the benchmarks of conduct and practice, and chiropractors will be measured against these benchmarks if a complaint is made to us. The *Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency* do not define the scope of chiropractic itself.
36. You can find the Code and Standard on our website at [www.gcc-uk.org/page.cfm?page\\_id=15](http://www.gcc-uk.org/page.cfm?page_id=15). If you need a copy in another format, please let us know the format that would most suit your needs.

37. We set these standards to make sure that wherever and whenever a member of the public sees a chiropractor, they can be sure the chiropractor meets standards that apply consistently across the UK. We do not need to know how the standards are met.
38. We believe that individuals know most about what they can and cannot do, and that education providers are the best sources of information about how to deliver a learning programme to make sure that a disabled student meets the outcomes required to graduate from their programme.
39. What this means is that registered chiropractors can make adjustments in their own practice to meet our standards. Registrants have to restrict or adapt their practice where any factor (health, disability or anything else) may affect their fitness to practise. This applies to every registrant, not only those who consider themselves to have a health condition or disability.

**Example**

Section B7 of the Code of Practice states that chiropractors must 'keep patient records which are legible, attributable and truly represent your interaction with the patient'. It also states that chiropractors must 'keep information about patients confidential' and 'must keep to the requirements of data protection law'.

If the person registering knows that their handwriting is normally considered to be difficult to read, they may decide to print their notes in block capitals or keep electronic patient records, to make sure that they can be used effectively in the future and by colleagues if necessary. In this way, the individual is adjusting their practice to make sure that they meet the Code of Practice.

Other examples of people who may make adjustments to meet this standard include someone with a visual impairment who uses a dictaphone or adapted laptop computer to help them take notes, or someone with dyslexia who might prefer to keep electronic notes. In each case, the chiropractor has taken responsibility for making sure that they meet the Code of Practice.

40. It would be against the law to give a list of disabilities which might prevent some people from registering. We want to make sure that decisions are based on each individual's ability to meet our standards and practise safely.

# Information for people applying to become a chiropractor

## Can I become a chiropractor?

41. If you want to work as a chiropractor, you will need to:
- a) gain a place on a chiropractic degree programme recognised by the GCC
  - b) successfully complete the programme
- and
- c) register with us.
42. You will then be able to call yourself a chiropractor and practise as a chiropractor. You will probably be self-employed, as this is how the vast majority of chiropractors work.
43. If you are wondering whether you can become a chiropractor, this document will probably not give you a definite 'yes' or 'no' answer, as each case is looked at individually. But it can tell you:
- a) what you need to do to find out whether you can become a chiropractor
  - b) how you can find out more
  - c) the organisations you will need to get in touch with
- and
- d) the decisions that you and others will need to make.

## Get your information from the experts

44. People may have different ideas about the abilities that you need to become a chiropractor, and sometimes these ideas will not be accurate. It is important that you get information from an informed source before you make a decision about your career, as there may be more opportunities available to you than you think.

### Example

A person with limited mobility is interested in becoming a chiropractor. His friends have told him that he cannot become a chiropractor because he would not be able to climb the stairs and work in the kind of buildings that they have seen chiropractors work in. This is incorrect advice, because to be registered as a chiropractor, the applicant needs to meet the GCC's *Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency* for the chiropractic profession. Being able to get up and down stairs is not a professional standard. (If the person were able to meet all the standards and become registered, it would be his responsibility to make sure that he could continue to meet our standards once he was practising.)

### Example

The staff of an education provider are discussing an application to the chiropractic course from a person who has told them that she is registered blind. The staff are concerned that she could not become a chiropractor because she would not be able to interpret radiographs or observe patients. If the staff were to make a decision on this basis alone, it would be against the law. Also, the term 'registered blind' can cover a wide range of sight difficulties.

It would be good practice for the staff to contact the applicant and get more detailed information about what she can and cannot do. They might also arrange an occupational health assessment rather than make assumptions. Under equalities legislation, staff need to avoid treating applicants with disabilities less favourably than others, and to avoid using stereotypes and making assumptions about what disabled people can do. As well as understanding the nature of the individual's disability, staff also need to explore the 'reasonable adjustments' that could be made for the individual to complete the chiropractic degree programme. They would need to make their decisions on whether or not to offer a place with these reasonable adjustments in mind.

## Communicating with the education provider

### Thinking of applying

45. You may be thinking about applying for a place on a chiropractic degree programme but are concerned about whether you will be able to undertake the programme successfully because of a disability. If so, we strongly recommend that you contact the education provider before you apply. This will allow them to explain to you what the programme is like, what it is like to work as a chiropractor and what other people in similar positions have found. They will also be able to explain the sort of reasonable adjustments that have been made to the programme in the past and how well these have worked for the people concerned.
46. The education provider will not be assessing your application at this point, but helping you think through whether chiropractic would be a wise career choice for you. In the course of the discussion, they may also tell you about other similar degree programmes you could do instead.

### When you apply

47. If you apply for a place on a chiropractic degree programme through the [UCAS](#) process, you can declare any disability on the application form.<sup>2</sup> Or, if you do not want to disclose this information on the UCAS form, you can leave the box blank and write to the education provider telling them about your disability. You may prefer to disclose a disability once you have begun the degree programme and are more confident that this information will be treated in a confidential and appropriate way.
48. It is against the law for education providers to discriminate against disabled people, so telling them in advance about any disability is designed to be of help to you. When you contact the education provider, you might want to ask them about their disability equality scheme or equality policy, or ask to talk to the disability service.

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2 The UCAS categories are: no disability; social/communication disorder e.g. Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder; blind/serious visual impairment not corrected by glasses; deaf or serious hearing impairment; a long-standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, epilepsy; mental health condition such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder; specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D; physical impairment or mobility issues such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches; a disability, impairment or medical condition not listed above; two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions.

49. We encourage you to disclose your disability, as an education provider can only act on the information that they know about. If the education provider knows about your disability, they will be able to consider whether they can deliver the learning and assessment in the programme in a way that meets your needs and enables you to meet the required learning outcomes. It also allows them to consider any reasonable adjustments that could support you in your studies. The education provider is likely to contact you to discuss your needs and how best they might meet them.
50. The information you provide will be kept confidential. If you disclose your disability when applying for a course, you may choose who else can be told about it – this is called ‘permission to disclose’. If you give staff permission to disclose, they can share information about your needs with the people you name.
51. The education provider may ask you to have some form of occupational health check during the application process or before you start the degree programme. They can ask this of any student, not just those who have disclosed a disability.
52. Some people may be concerned about being discriminated against, so may choose not to disclose a disability. Although we cannot guarantee that discrimination will never happen, we can reassure you that education providers have specific responsibilities under the law to treat you fairly and not to discriminate against applicants because they have a disability.

### **How will my application be considered?**

53. When you apply to a chiropractic degree programme, you are entitled to have your application considered fairly and legally.
54. [Information for admissions staff](#), in this guidance, sets out our advice for admissions staff, and you might want to look at this as well. They will also get advice from their higher education institution and the actions they take will need to follow the institution’s own policies. You can find out more from the education provider.
55. As far as the GCC is concerned, we expect the education provider to:
  - a) provide legal and fair admissions procedures to their chiropractic degree programmes
  - b) offer appropriate learning opportunities for chiropractic students and
  - c) assess at the end of the programme whether individuals have met all the chiropractic degree programme outcomes.

56. If you are considering applying for a chiropractic degree programme, you can always ask the staff whether they have read this document. If they haven't, they can download it from our website.

### **What if I think I have been treated unfairly?**

57. If you think that you have been unfairly refused a place because of your disability, you can take action.
58. You should contact the education provider first and go through their complaints procedure.
59. If having done this you need to take the issue further, you can do so. Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities publishes information about this on its website, including two information booklets which you may find useful.
60. *Making a complaint* is a document with information about how to complain.
61. *Disability discrimination post-16 education: the five-step test* will help you decide whether you may have been discriminated against because of your disability.
62. To take further action, you should contact the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) or the [Equality Commission for Northern Ireland](#). The contact details for Skill, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland are at the back of this document.

### **How do I get the help I need?**

63. If you gain a place on a recognised chiropractic degree programme, and if you tell the education provider about your disability, you may be entitled to support.
64. Most higher education institutions have specific staff to support disabled students. The education provider will be able to tell you who these people are and how you can contact them.
65. The main source of financial support for disabled students is through [Disabled Students' Allowances](#). Whether this applies to you depends on who funds the course. There are also differences in funding between the four UK countries. If you contact your education provider's disability service, it should have information on the support you might get under the funding arrangements that apply to that institution.

66. Disabled Students' Allowances cover any extra costs that are directly linked with your disability, such as the cost of a non-medical helper or any specialist equipment or travel. This allowance is only for students from the UK. Some education providers may also have funding for overseas students with support needs. Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities has published an information sheet called [Applying for Disabled Students' Allowances](#). To find out more about Disabled Students' Allowances and any other allowances, you could contact Skill or the disability officer at your education provider.<sup>3</sup>

### During your degree programme

67. During your degree programme, it is important that you have a realistic understanding of whether you can do tasks safely and effectively. Your ability to do certain tasks, or the level of support you might need to carry them out, may change over time.
68. We strongly recommend that you continue to disclose any important information about your disability during your programme. This means that staff can arrange any support or adjustments that you need to practise safely and effectively. They can also make sure that you are not put in situations which might pose a risk to you or to patients.

### After graduation – applying for registration

69. After you have graduated from a recognised chiropractic degree programme, you will need to apply for registration with us.
70. As described in the [Introduction](#), you will need to get your doctor to provide a report on your physical and mental health. There is more information about this in our document [Information for General Practitioners](#). When we ask doctors for this information, we are not asking them to assess your professional knowledge and skills. We ask your doctor for any information about your health that might affect your ability to practise safely and effectively in a way which poses no risk to patients.
71. The doctor who completes your health reference must have been your doctor for four years or more, or have had access to your medical records for the last four years. For this reason, you may find it better to register with a doctor in the town where you are studying as soon as you start your degree programme. Your previous doctor will then send over your medical records and your new doctor will have all the information they need to complete the health report for you.

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<sup>3</sup> See [Extra information](#), which provides the contact details for Skill and other organisations.

- 72. When you apply for registration with us, you are entitled to have your application considered fairly and legally. We need to know that you can meet our standards. We make registration decisions based only on our standards and the need to protect the public.
- 73. If we refuse your application for registration, you can appeal against this decision. First, you can appeal to us. If you do, we will put together a three-person appeal panel to look at your application and any extra information that you want to give us. Then, if this is not successful, you can apply to the courts.
- 74. If you want more detailed information on how to appeal against a decision we have made, you can find details of how to do this on our website at [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org).

### **After graduation – working as a chiropractor**

- 75. Once you have registered with us, your next step is to start to practise. Very few chiropractors are employees, other than perhaps for their first year of practice.
- 76. Employers have legal duties:
  - a) not to discriminate against you
  - b) to consider your application fairly
  - c) to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that you can work effectively.
- 77. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland both publish a code of practice for 'employment and occupation', which describes the duties of employers and helps disabled people to understand the law. The contact details for these organisations are at the end of this document.
- 78. However, as the vast majority of chiropractors are self-employed, you will need to think seriously about whether you will be able to work as a self-employed person once you have graduated.<sup>4</sup>

### **After graduation – occupational health screening**

- 79. If you do find work as an employee, your employer may ask you to take part in some kind of occupational health screening, which usually applies to all staff. This is usually a form or questionnaire, which you fill in and then send direct to the occupational health service used by your employer. The occupational health service may contact you for more information or ask you to go to a meeting or interview.

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<sup>4</sup> See the [Introduction](#) on meeting our standards.

80. If you are asked to attend a meeting or interview, you might find it helpful to do some preparation beforehand. For example, you could think about how you can clearly describe adjustments that have been made in the past to help you overcome different barriers, and the types of adjustments you have made yourself. You might also want to think about the positive things you can offer because of your disability.

# Information for admissions staff

81. In this section, we look at the responsibilities of admissions staff when considering applications from disabled people for places on education programmes. We also provide some information (and refer you to other sources of information) about supporting students on programmes and providing reasonable adjustments.
82. We have included several examples. We hope these will help you think about the things you need to consider when making decisions about disabled people when they apply for a place on a chiropractic degree programme. We recognise that situations are often more complicated than the examples we have given and that you need to make decisions on an individual basis. However, we hope that the examples will give you a useful illustration of how you might approach similar situations.

## The responsibilities of admissions staff

83. From 1 October 2010 Education is covered by Part 6 of the Equalities Act 2010. Education was previously covered in Part 4 of the DDA 1995 (amended 2005), which was introduced through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) in England, Scotland and Wales, or the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order 2005 (SEND0) in Northern Ireland.
84. The Quality Assurance Agency sets out [standards](#) for higher education institutions in terms of how they deal with disabled people. Part 3 of the Equality Challenge Unit's publication [Disability legislation: practical guidance for academic staff](#) focuses on admissions. Your institution will have its own policies and procedures for considering applications to degree programmes. We, the GCC, are concerned that the actions that you take are consistent with good practice and the law too. As a healthcare regulatory body, our main concern is the protection of the public. Therefore, we need to be sure that every student who graduates from a recognised chiropractic degree programme is fit to practise as a chiropractor.
85. How admissions staff meet their duties is for them to decide, in keeping with the institution's policies and procedures. We recommend that thinking about the reasonable adjustments that can be made to support an applicant is a good starting point, and this is one of the duties under Part 6 of the Equalities Act.
86. Having considered the reasonable adjustments that could be made, you might then consider whether, having made these adjustments, the applicant would be able to meet all the learning outcomes of the degree programme.

*Example*

A person with dyslexia applies for a degree programme in chiropractic. She meets the admission conditions for the programme and could be offered a place. An assessment of her disability by an educational psychologist is arranged. The educational psychologist recommends that the applicant should be allowed to complete assignments on a computer, rather than by hand, and have access to lecture notes in advance so that she can follow the lectures more easily. The chiropractic programme team discuss this with the university disability officer. Assignments normally need to be word-processed so no adjustment is needed. Following discussion, the education provider decides that they would be able to make the other adjustment (and that it would be likely to be unlawful if they did not make this adjustment). The admissions tutor decides that the adjustment needed would be 'reasonable' and would be possible.

*Example*

An applicant to a chiropractic programme says that he is partially sighted. The education provider contacts him to discuss how he could be supported during his studies. They also decide to get more information from an occupational health assessment. From this, they learn that the applicant's vision is extremely limited and that he can see very little, or nothing, of objects that are close to him.

There is overall concern that because of the limited extent of the applicant's sight, he will not be able to meet some of the chiropractic programme outcomes relating to the assessment of patients: in particular, that 'chiropractors must be able to gain more information from the patient by physically examining them' including 'posture and gait'. The programme team contact the disability officer to discuss the possibility of an assistant helping the applicant with this part of the programme. After this discussion, a decision is reached that this is not a possible way forward because the student would be relying on the assistant's observation skills, knowledge and experience. The student would not be using his own skills to meet the learning outcomes.

The education provider decides not to offer the applicant a place. They contact him to discuss the other health courses they offer which may be more appropriate for him.

## Not making assumptions about working as a chiropractor

87. When considering applications, it is important to be aware of the factors that you can lawfully take into account and those you cannot. When you look at an application, you need to decide:
- a) whether the applicant meets your admission conditions
  - b) whether you can make any reasonable adjustments to the delivery of your programme to meet the individual's needs so that they can achieve all the learning outcomes.
88. As with all applicants, you should not make any assumptions about the likelihood of the applicant being employed at the end of the programme or of their being able to work on a self-employed basis. However, you do have a duty of care to students and will need to give them information about their need to register with us before they can practise. This might be something they want to think about before they commit to study for four years or more.

## Mental health

89. We recognise that making decisions about applicants who disclose mental health conditions can be challenging, particularly if that condition is intermittent.
90. As with any other applicant, it is important that you properly explore the nature and extent of the disability, avoiding stereotypes or assumptions. You need to consider whether the applicant can meet the programme outcomes and whether any reasonable adjustments can be made.

### Example

An applicant to a chiropractic programme disclosed in her application that she had bipolar disorder.

The admissions staff asked for more information from the applicant and for medical evidence of her condition. They were confident that they could accept the applicant, who met their admissions criteria. However, from informal discussions with colleagues who worked in clinical practice, they were concerned about whether the applicant would gain employment once she had graduated.

Following discussion with the chiropractic programme team and the disability officer of the university, it was decided to offer the applicant a place. This was because the applicant's condition was likely to be well managed by medication and self-monitoring. Also, many chiropractors are self-employed so do not rely on having to find an employer. Having talked through the issues that the applicant might need to manage in the degree programme, and later in practice, they decided to offer her a place.

91. With more serious conditions, you may have to assess the safety of the applicant, other students, patients and other people in the education and clinic environment. This might include using occupational health services.
92. Whether the applicant has insight into and understanding of their own condition will be an important factor in your decision. An applicant will have insight and understanding if they have a realistic, informed idea of their condition. This might include considering whether they have been successfully involved in their own treatment.

### **Individual assessment**

93. The examples we have given show that it is important to treat every case individually and avoid stereotypes or judgements. Considering each application individually means that assumptions are not being made about disabled people. Instead, an informed decision is made on each applicant.
94. It is against the law for the GCC to list those disabilities and medical conditions that would prevent an individual meeting all the learning outcomes of the programme. Education providers have a duty to consider whether an individual will be able to meet all the programme outcomes by the end of the course, given that reasonable adjustments can be made in the educational provision.

### **Early communication**

95. An important part of meeting your responsibilities is to consider, before an applicant starts studying, how they will cope with all aspects of the programme. What you want to avoid is a student starting on the degree programme, then having problems which could have been dealt with, or predicted, earlier on. This would cause unnecessary stress and difficulty for the student and staff.
96. When considering applications from disabled people, you will often find that they have already developed different ways of working and have a good idea of the reasonable adjustments they are likely to need to take part in the degree programme. Offering people the opportunity to talk as early as possible about their ideas, their concerns, and their needs, will help make sure that all the relevant factors are considered. However, some students may not know what they need and may need to discuss this with the disability service. It is good practice to give everyone who has disclosed a disability the contact details of the institution's disability officer.

97. If you offer someone a place, you should contact them to make the preparations needed for them to join the degree programme. Some adjustments can be made quickly, whereas others will take time. For example, reminding lecturers and tutors to provide handouts in different formats may take very little time. However, making alternative arrangements for clinical practice may take considerably more time. This will also depend on the student having given permission to tell other people (such as clinic tutors) about their disability. You should contact your disability service to find out your organisation's policy on disclosure and responsibilities.
98. In all cases, early communication between you and the student will help to make sure that things run smoothly.

### *Example*

An individual with hearing loss applies for a place on a chiropractic degree programme. The admissions team contacts him to find out more about his disability and the extent of his hearing loss. They discover that he has some hearing and arrange an individual assessment for him. The assessment shows that he has sufficient hearing to be able to meet the learning outcomes of the programme, such as the ability to auscultate (listen to sounds from the internal organs of the body using a stethoscope). The applicant is still concerned about the clinical aspect of the programme and whether his hearing might cause problems with communicating with patients and others in the clinic. The applicant gives permission to disclose his disability, so the admissions office contacts the programme manager. She is confident that, given the individual assessment that has been made, they would be able to arrange appropriate opportunities within the student clinic which has a loop system fitted. She also notes there might be positive advantages as the applicant also has the ability to sign. This information is conveyed to the applicant and he is offered a place. Arrangements are also put in place so once the student starts the course he has regular contact with the disability officer to make sure that everything is going to plan.

## Clinical practice

99. Clinical practice requirements, whether within the education provider's clinic or arranged through placements, are a vital part of recognised chiropractic degree programmes. This is because they give students the opportunity to apply their learning under supervision to real patients in the practice environment.

### Example

The manager of a chiropractic degree programme was considering clinical practice requirements for a student chiropractor who had a speech difficulty following a car accident and a tracheotomy some years previously. The speech difficulty meant that, when meeting new people, the student occasionally used strategies such as writing down what he wanted to say, to make sure that people understood him. The student had found that once staff, colleagues and students had some experience of communicating with him, they could understand his speech without him having to write it down.

The programme manager met the student to discuss how clinical practice could best be structured in a way that would be helpful to him. He said he was worried about clinical practice and the barriers which he might face. The programme manager discussed with him the adjustments that could be made and the support that would be given during the clinic period. The manager suggested to the student that as some of the patients were adults with communication difficulties it might be helpful for him to work mainly with these patients. However, the student felt that writing, his usual method of communicating with someone who could not understand his speech, might not be effective for all patients with communication difficulties. The programme manager came to an agreement with the student about how the clinic period could be structured to enable him to see those patients who would be able to understand written communication. The programme manager then put the necessary arrangements in place for this to happen.

100. This example shows how you need to make reasonable adjustments to clinical practice requirements to give your disabled students the best chance of showing how they meet the learning outcomes of the degree programme.

- 101.** Education providers that use practice placements away from the normal educational setting and its facilities need to be aware that their responsibility includes making sure that the facilities are suitable for disabled students. Also, staff within the placement settings have a direct legal duty not to discriminate against disabled people. For more information about the responsibilities of organisations which provide practice placements, see the code of conduct for 'employment and occupation' produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The Quality Assurance Agency also publishes codes for universities on placements and a code of practice on supporting disabled students. If you offer placement opportunities to your students, you must provide specific information to placement providers about supporting disabled students.

### **Keeping a record**

- 102.** To make sure that you are meeting your legal responsibilities, we strongly recommend that you keep a record of the decision-making process that you went through. Include the people whose opinions and advice you have sought and the reasons for any decisions made. Your validating university is likely to have procedures and forms to help with this.
- 103.** You could also ask the applicant to sign that the information you have written down is correct, and whether they are happy for it to be passed on, to whom and for what purpose. Once you have made a record, you must keep this information confidential.
- 104.** By keeping this information, you will be able to refer to your process and the information you have received if anyone asks any questions about any of your decisions.

## Extra information

### What is a 'reasonable' adjustment?

- 105.** The idea of 'reasonableness' is vital to the [legal duties](#) of education providers. It means that people who provide education have a duty to find out how they can adapt their educational programmes to meet the needs of disabled students who have met the standards for entry to the course.
- 106.** Whether or not an adjustment is 'reasonable' depends on many factors, including:
- a) the cost of the adjustment
  - b) the resources of the service
  - c) the effectiveness of the change.
- 108.** The idea of 'reasonableness' means that education providers have to look at whether they can make the adjustment. However, they do **not** have to make every adjustment that a student asks for.
- 109.** An education provider cannot justify that an adjustment is unreasonable simply because it costs too much money or is inconvenient. Nor can decisions be based on informal or uninformed opinion.

#### *Example*

An education provider tells a person with a mobility problem that it cannot offer them a place because their buildings are not suitable as there are lots of stairs. They have been told informally that improving the building, for example, by getting a ramp and a lift, would be too expensive. So, the education provider does not offer the person a place because the adjustments needed are not reasonable because they would cost money.

This is an example of bad practice which is not consistent with the law, because the provider has not properly assessed the reasonableness of the adjustments needed or gained informed views on them.

**Example**

An education provider receives an application from a student with a mobility problem. Having assessed the applicant's needs, they do an access audit of their buildings. This highlights some considerable work that needs to be done to improve their facilities for someone with limited mobility. They can only afford to complete this work in stages, over five years. They contact the student to ask about adjusting their timetabling so that the student only has to use ground floor teaching space during their first year. Although the education provider cannot afford all the physical adjustments that the student needs, they are still looking at other ways of meeting the student's needs.

This is an example of good practice which meets the requirements of the law. It shows that the provider has considered and assessed options with a view to making their service accessible to individuals with disabilities.

110. There is more information about adjustments and about reasonableness in documents produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In particular, their document *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education and Related Services* contains much more detailed information about the legal responsibilities of education providers.

**Finding out more from us**

111. The easiest way to find out more information about us and our processes is to look at our website at [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org). The website gives information about how we work, including the list of chiropractic degree programmes that we recognise, full details of our registration process and much more. If the information that you need is not on our website, you can also contact us at:

General Chiropractic Council  
44 Wicklow Street  
London WC1X 9HL

Phone: 020 7713 5155

Email: [enquiries@gcc-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@gcc-uk.org)

112. You can find information about education providers offering recognised chiropractic degree programmes at:  
[www.gcc-uk.org/page.cfm?page\\_id=25](http://www.gcc-uk.org/page.cfm?page_id=25)

## Other organisations

113. Here are some other organisations that may be able to offer you help and information:

### **Access Disability Ltd**

Access Disability Ltd is a disability awareness organisation which aims to help companies comply with the law. Its focus is on physical and service audits, responding to updated legislation (for example, Part M Building Regulations), as well as general good practice.

[www.accessdisability.co.uk](http://www.accessdisability.co.uk) or email [info@accessdisability.co.uk](mailto:info@accessdisability.co.uk)

### **British Dyslexia Association**

Unit 8 Bracknell Beeches, Old Bracknell Lane, Bracknell RG12 7BW

For enquiries about dyslexia:

Helpline: 0845 251 9003

Fax: 0845 251 9005

Email: [helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:helpline@bdadyslexia.org.uk)

[www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk)

### **Education and Library Boards**

[www.education-support.org.uk](http://www.education-support.org.uk)

The contact details for the five Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards are on this website.

### **Employers' Forum on Disability**

Nutmeg House, 60 Gainsford Street, London SE1 2NY

Phone: 020 7403 3020

Fax: 020 7403 0404

Minicom: 020 7403 0040

Email: [enquiries@efd.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@efd.org.uk)

[www.efd.org.uk](http://www.efd.org.uk)

The Employers' Forum on Disability is the employers' organisation focused on the issue of disability in the workplace.

### **Employers' Forum on Disability (Northern Ireland)**

Banbridge Enterprise Centre, Scarva Road Industrial Estate, Banbridge BT32 3QD

Phone or textphone: 028 4062 4526

Fax: 028 4066 9665

Email: [info@efdni.org](mailto:info@efdni.org)

[www.efdni.org](http://www.efdni.org)

### **Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)**

7th Floor, Queen's House, 55/56 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3LJ

Phone: 020 7438 1010

Fax: 020 7438 1011

Email: [info@ecu.ac.uk](mailto:info@ecu.ac.uk)

[www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

The ECU works to promote equality for staff and students in higher education.

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)**

Helplines

England: 0845 604 6610, textphone 0845 604 6620

Scotland: 0845 604 5510, textphone 0845 604 5520

Wales: 0845 604 8810, textphone 0845 604 8820

Offices:

*Manchester* – Arndale House, The Arndale Centre, Manchester M4 3AQ

Phone: 0161 829 8100 (non-helpline calls only)

Fax: 0161 829 8110

Email: [info@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:info@equalityhumanrights.com)

*London* – 3 More London, Riverside, Tooley Street, London SE1 2RG

Phone: 020 3117 0235 (non-helpline calls only)

Fax: 020 3117 0237

Email: [info@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:info@equalityhumanrights.com)

*Cardiff* – 3rd floor, 3 Callaghan Square, Cardiff CF10 5BT

Phone: 02920 447710 (non-helpline calls only)

Textphone: 029 20447713

Fax: 02920 447712

Email: [wales@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:wales@equalityhumanrights.com)

*Glasgow* – The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DU

Phone: 0141 228 5910 (non-helpline calls only)

Fax: 0141 228 5912

Email: [scotland@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:scotland@equalityhumanrights.com)

The EHRC, as a statutory body, has the responsibility to protect, enforce and promote equality across the seven 'protected grounds': age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. It publishes information about the duties of individuals and organisations (employers, education and training

institutions, service providers and professional bodies) under the Disability Discrimination Act and gives information on individuals' rights.

### **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

Equality House, 7–9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP

Phone: 028 90 500 600

Textphone: 028 90 500 589

Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)

[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland publishes information about the duties of individuals and organisations under the Disability Discrimination Act. Their codes of practice are particularly useful for education providers.

### **Mind**

15–19 Broadway, London E15 4BQ

Phone: 020 8519 2122

Mind infoline: 0845 766 0163

Fax: 020 8522 1725

Email: [contact@mind.org.uk](mailto:contact@mind.org.uk)

Mind is an organisation which offers information to people with mental health conditions, and campaigns for better support.

### **Quality Assurance Agency**

*Head Office* – Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Phone: 01452 557000

Fax: 01452 557070

Email: [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)

### **Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)**

19–23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL

Phone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Email: [information@rnid.org.uk](mailto:information@rnid.org.uk)

RNID offers a range of services for deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and provides information and support on all aspects of deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus.

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**

105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE

Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Phone: 020 7388 1266

Fax: 020 7388 2034

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

If you or someone you know has a sight problem, the RNIB can help. The staff on their helpline can put you in touch with specialist advice services, and give you details of support groups and services in your area. They can also give you free information on:

- eye conditions
- making the most of your remaining vision
- magnifiers and lighting
- registering a blind or partially sighted person
- benefits and your rights
- living with sight loss.

**Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities**

*Head Office* – Chapter House, 18–20 Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW  
Information service (open Tuesdays 11.30am to 1.30pm, and  
Thursdays 1.30pm to 3.30pm)

Phone: 0800 328 5050

Text phone: 020 7450 0620

Email: [info@skill.org.uk](mailto:info@skill.org.uk)

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

## **Glossary**

### ***Access to Work***

'Access to Work' is a scheme that is run through Jobcentre Plus offices. As well as giving advice and information to employers and disabled people, Jobcentre Plus pays a grant, through Access to Work, towards any extra employment costs that result from a person's disability. You can find out more from [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

### ***Applicant***

Someone who is applying to a recognised education programme, or someone who is suitably qualified and is applying for registration with us.

### ***Recognised education programme***

An education programme that has been recognised by us. This means that it meets our Degree Recognition Criteria. A list of recognised education programmes is on our website.

### ***Bipolar disorder***

Also known as manic depression. It is a mental illness which causes very 'high' and 'low' moods.

### ***Code of Practice***

The *Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency* sets out for patients the quality of care they are entitled to receive from chiropractors. For chiropractors, they are the benchmarks of conduct and practice they will be measured against if a complaint is made to us.

### ***Council***

The Council is the group of members of the public and chiropractors who set our strategy and policies.

### ***Disability officer***

Most universities will have a disability officer who can advise staff on how they can meet the needs of disabled students, as well as advising applicants.

### ***Disabled person***

The law defines a disabled person as 'someone with a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, adverse, long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. 'Long-term' is defined as lasting more than 12 months.

### ***Disabled Students' Allowances***

The Disabled Students' Allowances cover any extra costs that you have to pay during your course that are directly associated with your disability; for example, the cost of a non-medical helper or any specialist equipment or travel.

### ***Dyspraxia (developmental coordination disorder)***

A disorder in the organisation of movement which leads to problems with language, perception and thought.

### ***Education provider***

Education provider is the term that we use for any organisation which provides a recognised education programme. We will normally use this term on our website and in our literature because not all education providers are universities.

### ***Equality Act 2010***

This Act aims to reform and harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. As parts of the Act are brought into force from 1 October 2010, it will replace all existing equality legislation, including the DDA.

### ***Health report***

A health report is part of the information that we need from people applying to join the Register. This is signed by a doctor to confirm that the person is in good health, physically and mentally.

### ***Protected title***

The term 'chiropractor' is a 'protected title'. Only people who are on our Register can use the title 'chiropractor'. Anyone who is not on our Register and uses the title of chiropractor is breaking the law, and could be prosecuted.

### ***Register***

The Register is a list that we keep of chiropractors who meet our standards. We publish the Register on our website, so anyone who wants to check a chiropractor's registration can do so online, free of charge. Under the Chiropractors Act 1994, anyone who calls themselves a chiropractor in the UK must be registered with us.

### ***Registrant***

The term 'registrant' refers to a chiropractor who is on our Register.

### ***Standard of proficiency***

See *Code of Practice*.