



BCOM AND THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

This document draws from the BCOM Equal Opportunities Policy and relevant legislation, specifically the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 but also the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001. Additional guidance has been sought from the General Osteopathic Council. The contents herein govern all aspects of College life that affect students. There is also a disability statement for employees. The College seeks to support students with disabilities to the fullest, within the context of producing what has been recognised as “stand-alone” graduate practitioners, with reference to accepted teaching practice among Osteopathic Educational Institutions, the requirements of the General Osteopathic Council and certain physical and other demands associated with conventional osteopathic practice.

Definition Of Terms

For the purposes of the statement, a person is recognised as having a disability once they have declared it to the College. There is no distinction between physical and mental disabilities, with reference to the specifics of osteopathic practice and teaching and learning strategies leading thereto. So that an appropriate level of support can be provided, students are requested to do so as clearly as possible and to a relevant person, if they have not already done so on their UCAS application. Additionally, if a disability is diagnosed after admission, students are encouraged to make the College aware as appropriate. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 also applies to people who have been, but are no longer, disabled and also offers some protection for non-disabled people from harassment relating to disability. Some variable conditions (e.g. multiple sclerosis or sickle-cell anaemia) will mean that students' needs will change over time.

The Principle of Equality Of Opportunity at BCOM

The College operates an Equal Opportunities Policy that follows the same guidelines as those of the University of Westminster, its validating body. The adoption of this policy is to ensure that no student or applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, marital status, sexual orientation, trade-union activity, political or religious belief. BCOM is further committed to ensuring that no person should suffer disadvantage by reason of their physical or mental disability or family responsibility, provided he/she has the necessary attributes to undertake the degree, as it is currently taught, according to general academic practice within Osteopathy.

The College will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to support disabled candidates in their studies. However, because the College offers solely vocational courses, which allow entry into the Osteopathic profession, certain physical abilities can be considered as “competence standards” under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act. The College opposes direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability at any stage, including admissions, and will advise applicants and students appropriately about practice- and technique-based competence standards and what might reasonably be expected of a course of professional osteopathic study.

Disability & Osteopathic Technique & Practice

Whilst there is no requirement for students to practise after graduation, it is a reasonable assumption that they will wish to do so and teaching takes place with that assumption in mind. The College is charged by its governing body, the General Osteopathic Council, to produce “safe, competent practitioners”. At point of graduation, it is expected that all students will be able to become what is recognised as a “stand-alone” practitioner. The commitment of both the professional register and BCOM to public safety is paramount: the College will have to be assured that all students and applicants have the physical/manual, visual/sensory and other capacities to practise safely. However, the College also recognises that over time there may be technical innovations that may extend osteopathic practice to those whose disabilities have previously limited their access to the profession. BCOM will seek to provide a teaching and learning environment which embraces such developments so that the profile of student and practising osteopaths is as wide as possible. A core element of the course is the teaching of osteopathic technique. This demands hand/eye coordination and fine motor skills in the practice of all techniques. Many techniques that are essential to osteopathic practice also demand a high level of mobility in order to carry out essential manipulation and mobilisation that is needed in the course of treating most patients. Osteopathic technique is taught through all years of the course.

Application Advice For Those Affected By Disability

Every applicant to the British College of Osteopathic Medicine is considered on an individual basis and we welcome applications from students with disabilities. It will be very important to ascertain at an early stage whether a candidate will be able to fulfil the core elements of the course and whether, on graduation, applicants will be fit to practice as osteopaths, as charged by the General Osteopathic Council. The Council, is responsible for making sure that registered professionals are ‘fit to practise’ i.e. that they are able to carry out their duties competently without undue risk to patients. However, as professional bodies do not interview or train students, the onus is on institutions such as the College to advise and support students with disabilities in making informed choices. The College approaches this on an individual basis and applies all competence standards to all students either with or without disabilities. You can obtain admissions advice from the

Academic Registrar at any stage of the application process. The Registrar can be e-mailed at kk@bcom.ac.uk or written to at BCOM, Lief House, 120 – 122 Finchley Road, London, NW3 5HR. **All applications will be initially processed, along with all other applications, to see whether the applicant meets core entry requirements without reference to disability.** Details of disability given on UCAS forms will be highlighted and discussed at the interview stage of the admissions process. We encourage students to make the College aware of personal disability issues as soon as possible. Disclosure will be treated in a positive, sensitive and constructive manner and will enable the College to support students.

Additional Support

BCOM students are able to apply for Disabled Students Allowance and the Registry can advise on procedure. The College actively supports students with dyslexia and seeks outside advice, currently from the local Hampstead Dyslexia Clinic, on best provision for students affected by dyslexia, including those who present with another disability with which dyslexia may be associated. BCOM is a small, well-integrated institution and seeks to support its students and applicants wherever it can. Students with disabilities are encouraged to seek advice from the College wherever appropriate, though the College also recognises that students may not wish to be overly “defined” by any disability they may have and will allow students to establish the level of support that they require both generally and in specific circumstances.