



# **Policy for Physical Access and Egress for Disabled People**

**15 June 2011**

## Introduction

The policy for Physical Access and Egress at Ulster University outlines the University's commitment to comply with legislative requirements and to aspire to be an example of good practice in this area. The policy aligns with the University's Equality Scheme and its Disability Action Plan and takes active and deliberate account of Ulster's Corporate Plan, its Corporate Aims and Objectives, its Core Values and its Estate Strategy.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

The University **estate** comprises all University buildings, open spaces, grounds, facilities (including accommodation, recreational and service facilities), laboratories, car parking and arrangements for other modes of transport. It does not include any estate owned by the University's collaborative partners (e.g. further education colleges or other universities running Ulster University courses), for which their governing/corporate bodies have primary responsibility.

**Physical access and egress** throughout and between the University buildings is the means of entry, perambulation and exit which are identifiable, proportional and sensitive to the requirements of all individuals and groups at the University and its campuses. **Egress** includes emergency egress.

This policy seeks compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which places a **positive duty** on the University to make both anticipatory and reactive reasonable adjustments to its estate in order to enable disabled individuals open, convenient and safe access and egress.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, **disability** is defined as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Some disabilities may be visible, but others may not be immediately obvious, such as mental ill-health or epilepsy.

## Legislation Standards

The policy seeks compliance with the following legislation and standards:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) (as amended);
- The Special Educational and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SENDO);
- The Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 (The ‘disability duties’);
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998);
- Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 (as amended);
- Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (NI);
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 (as amended);
- The Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006;
- The Fire Safety Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010
- Building Regulations: The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 (as amended)
  - Technical Booklet Part R: 2012 “Access to and use of Buildings”;
  - Technical Booklet Part H: 2012 “Stairs ramps, guarding and protection from impact;
  - Technical Booklet Part E: 2012 “Fire Safety”;
  - Technical Booklet Part V: 2012 “Glazing”.

The University will also be guided by the following:

- British Standards
  - BS 8300: 2009 + A1:2010
  - BS 9999: 2008
- Departmental Guidance
  - The Evacuation of Disabled People from Buildings;
- Statutory planning considerations:
  - PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking;
  - Supporting Design Concept Statements;
- Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education – Section 3: Students with Disabilities;
- University policies:
  - Equal Opportunities Policy;
  - Estates Strategy;
  - Procurement policy;
  - Health and Safety Policy; and
- The University’s Equality Scheme.

It is important that Ulster University complies with, and demonstrates evident sensitivity to, these diverse statutory and regulatory requirements and policy priorities in order to enhance its reputation as a leading centre of excellence in teaching and research in Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland and beyond.

## **Policy Statement/Aims**

The policy for Physical Access and Egress at Ulster University seeks to ensure that the University estate is universally accessible as this will provide equality of access and egress for all students, staff and visitors to the University. The University will undertake to remove any physical barriers to access and egress, or where this is not possible, to find a reasonable alternative method of providing the service/facility in question so as to facilitate this intended equality.

The policy for Physical Access and Egress takes into account the changing nature and time frames associated with Ulster University's strategic development plan. Therefore the policy aims to ensure:

- that best practice is incorporated into the design of any new buildings;
- the current provision for access and egress to existing buildings (including any planned refurbishment) complies with the legislative standards;
- that requests for reasonable physical adjustments will be dealt with in a way which complies with legislative standards, and
- the requirements of the Fire Regulations regarding the evacuation of disabled people are met.

## **Implementation**

The primary responsibility for this policy rests with Ulster University. Within available resources, the Department of Physical Resources has specific responsibility for the effective execution of this policy. However, it will liaise with Health and Safety Services, the Policy Implementation Unit and Student Support to ensure its effective implementation. In order to implement this policy Physical Resources will:

- Ensure that available resources are allocated in such a way as to fulfil the objectives of the policy.
- Communicate with and direct its staff, contractors and agents in a manner consistent with the aims and objectives of the policy.

The policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Additional 'In Year' Physical Access and Egress Requirements**

Each year some students and staff will have specific additional minor physical access requirements which may not have been anticipated by the University. These are known as 'In Year' requirements. 'In Year' requirements should be reported to the following departments, so that potential reasonable adjustments can be discussed in confidence.

**Students:** Student Support

**Staff and visitors:** Policy Implementation Unit

Staff from these departments will then liaise with Physical Resources and Health and Safety Services regarding reasonable adjustments. Any reasonable adjustments will then be programmed and actioned.

### **Additional Emergency Egress Requirements - Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans**

Some staff and/or students require assistance to evacuate a building during an emergency. In these cases, individual Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are drawn up by the University's Fire Officer, in conjunction with Disability Services, the Policy Implementation Unit and Physical Resources Departments.

Students requiring a PEEP should contact Student Support and staff requiring a PEEP should contact the Policy Implementation Unit. Staff from these departments will then liaise with Health and Safety Services

This will complement the University's general evacuation strategy and the emergency fire action plan for its buildings.

### **Additional Useful Information**

For further information about the policy and/or its implementation, please contact:

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