

# **Holy Cross College Local Offer**

## **Curriculum**

Holy Cross offers a mainly Level 3 academic curriculum, consisting of A levels and several BTEC-type courses. Each student has an individualised Study Programme, negotiated with them at enrolment based on this Level 3 curriculum.

Holy Cross also offers GCSE resit opportunities in Maths, English and Science for students who have not yet achieved a grade C in these subjects. We have a flexible approach and often have a number of students studying a reduced programme based on their individual needs. All subjects offer support sessions for students to enable them to catch up, consolidate their knowledge and work on improving their performance in that subject and there is an emphasis on Skills Development throughout the curriculum. The Learning Support Department also offers a Study Skills programme for students to develop their learning skills, for example, time management, independent learning, examination technique and revision skills.

All students attend a tutorial lesson every week which focuses on pastoral issues and generic skills development. Students also attend a lesson of general RE, which covers various themes including relationships, ethics, personal development and social issues. These lessons are less academic in nature and focus on students developing their own individual perspective through debate and discussion.

## **Physical Access**

Holy Cross is situated on a compact site comprising several stand-alone buildings wrapped around a central quad. Many of our students with mobility difficulties find this design helpful in terms of moving around between the different areas. With a student population of approximately 2000 students, the campus offers a vibrant and sociable atmosphere whilst retaining a friendly and welcoming feel.

There are lifts in all buildings making the vast majority of classrooms and other learning environments are wholly accessible. All specialist learning areas have height adjustable tables, and there are also height-adjustable tables in IT suites and the library.

The College is situated close to Bury town centre and the Metrolink/bus interchange and has strong transport links via a regular bus service which stops outside the door. We are able to provide reserved car parking spaces on site for disabled students who drive, in addition to extensive parking at a local sports club for other students, and a drop-off point for students who use taxis or who are dropped off by parents/carers.

## **Classrooms**

Classrooms are equipped with Smartboards, and teachers can provide students with access to presentations and other learning materials on line. The College has an extensive Moodle site containing an array of learning materials across all subjects which students can access through college and at home via the internet.

Holy Cross has a distinctive ethos and a strong commitment to making education possible for those who find it challenging. This can be seen in the positive and supportive approach all our teachers have towards providing the most effective



learning experience for all our learners and is evidenced through a range of innovative approaches to teaching and learning, including: effective use of seating plans; differentiated approaches to questioning; effective and regular use of assessment for learning in the classroom; the use of frameworks, scaffolding and modelling to support all students; a variety of activities and opportunities for learners in the classroom; targeted additional subject support sessions for students with different needs; and an emphasis on developing skills such as literacy, collaboration and independence.

In addition, teachers will discuss students' progress in individual interviews in which needs are identified and targets set. Equal Opportunities and Differentiation are observed specifically via the Teacher Observation Process.

All teachers undertake induction training on Equality and Diversity and Learning Support. Members of the Learning Support Department attend subject team meetings to provide training and information on specific issues and individual students.

## **Learning Support Department**

To enable students coming to Holy Cross to achieve their learning and qualification aims, the college has developed a highly skilled and professional Learning Support team.

The support includes help with time management, organisation, and the development of independent learning skills. Holy Cross provides a supportive environment for all its students, but we recognise that some learners require additional help to enable them to succeed. This may be because of a learning difficulty, health or medical problem, a disability or language difficulties.

The Learning Support team has a wide range of experience supporting students with a variety of support needs, including dyslexia, visual impairment, deaf/hearing impairment, autistic spectrum disorders, emotional behavioural difficulties, physical disability and ESOL issues. Students will have the opportunity to discuss their support needs fully with a member of the Learning Support Department and an individual package of support will be developed. Support we can offer includes:

- Assessment of literacy and numeracy skills
- In-class support, for example, note-taking
- Study Skills support, including essay planning, organisation, assignment and report writing, revision and examination technique
- Development of adapted and differentiated learning materials
- Arrangements for examination concessions, including extra time, use of a reader/scribe, use of specialist equipment
- Support to enable students to participate fully in College activities, including residentials, trips and other extra-curricular activities
- Referral for further assessment
- Provision of specialist equipment including laptops, CCTVS and specialist software
- Support for short term problems, such as injuries or illness
- Support at lunchtimes, breaktimes and free periods. If appropriate, this can be used to develop students' social and independence skills or provide support related to their disability

However, this is not an exhaustive list and we are happy to discuss individual requirements at any time.

## **Additional Support:**

### **Pre-Entry/Transition**

Students who declare a disability or learning difficulty are routinely contacted once conditional offers have been made. Often students and/or their parents/carers have been in touch with the College well before this time to discuss individual requirements and we welcome this contact as it enables us to work with the student to provide a successful transition onto the next stage of their academic journey. Typically, students will be invited in for a visit, a tour of the College and to meet members of the Learning Support Department.

Where appropriate, a more intensive package of support can be arranged: for example, previously staff have gone to school to meet the student and arranged a series of visits to the college including taster sessions in specific subjects. Members of the Learning Support Department are keen to attend students' reviews during year 11, or even year 10, as this also helps to promote a smooth transition.

After enrolment, all students undertake an Initial Learning Assessment to help the College to identify those individuals who would benefit from additional support and further assessment.

### **In-class**

Where appropriate, students are offered in-class support to help with specific tasks, for example, note-taking, reading, assistance with practical aspects of lessons. Additionally, in-class support can be used to provide reassurance or behavioural guidance for students with specific needs, perhaps arising from ADHD or other autistic spectrum disorders. In some circumstances, this support would be necessary throughout the student's time at College.

However, in many cases we would look to develop the student's ability to work independently and manage effectively in a classroom without support. Any reduction in the amount of support offered would be done in close liaison with the student and their teachers to ensure it is effective and appropriate.

### **Out of Class**

The Learning Support Department provides a workshop area where students can drop into access support with learning issues and a social environment which is supervised and managed by experienced staff. A "lunch club" provides an environment where less confident students, or those who require specific help with eating, can be supported alongside their peer group.

### **Personal Care**

The College has accessible toilets in all buildings. Two of these are equipped with a hoist (one of which is portable) to provide support to students who need this level of help with personal care. Students with mobility issues can be supported to move around the campus, even if they do not require support in class.

We can also provide assistance with eating and drinking, including feeding. Our catering staff will also provide assistance within the refectory, such as carrying trays, or offering priority service to students who require it. There are height-adjustable tables within the refectory and social area and flexible seating to allow students who use wheelchairs to interact socially with their peer group.

## **Examinations/Assessment**

Most of our courses are assessed by external examinations governed by the JCQ Regulations. We provide individualised access arrangements based on student need. Commonly used arrangements are: extra time; rest breaks; separate room; use of a word processor/PC; reader; scribe. We can also provide access to specialist software such as Dragon Dictate. In all these cases, the appropriate arrangement must be the student's "normal way of working".

We can provide specialist assessment of specific learning difficulties to provide evidence for the provision of these arrangements. However, where the need arises from a medical condition, students are required to provide evidence from an appropriately qualified practitioner. JCQ now stipulate that this evidence should come from a consultant doctor rather than a GP and it is likely that this will incur a cost for the student.

## **Independent living**

The Learning Support Department arranges an Independent Living Programme to provide opportunities to individual students to build up a range of social and practical skills as they move into adulthood. This is a supplement to the main taught programme on which the student would be enrolled and covers areas such as: travel; broadening cultural experiences; shopping and handling money independently.

As students move into their second year, the programme may be more tailored to progression and include visits to university campuses; preparation for interviews; planning journeys to and from open days. The main aim of the programme is to build student's skills and confidence in life and employability skills.

Many of these activities take place off-site, but a range of events are also organised within the department to promote students social skills and provide opportunities for interaction outside the classroom. These include a food share as part of the College's One World Week and a Christmas party organised by the student group. Students are also supported to attend College off-site activities, such as the visit to the UCAS Careers event at the Manchester Convention Centre.

## **Enrichment**

The College organises a range of enrichment opportunities and these are accessible to all our students, including those with additional needs. We would look at each case individually to ensure that all needs were effectively met and the individual student was able to access the full range of activities.

Previously we have supported students with physical disabilities for foreign residential visits and subject-based trips to London; we have provided additional staff training to ensure a student with a severe medical condition could join a trip to

London; and enabled students with physical disabilities to participate in visits to museums and theme parks.

The Learning Support Department has arranged two activities each year as part of the College's enrichment week and given preference to students who receive support on these trips, although they remain a mainstream activity. This has enabled students who may lack confidence to participate in enrichment, reassured that they will be supported and will be accompanied by familiar staff, without being singled out. Students with additional needs who wish to access any of the other opportunities available during enrichment week have also been supported.

Many of the Colleges' departments run extension and other enrichment groups throughout the year, including Medics Group, Maths Club and Anime Club. Some of these are staff-led, others are facilitated by students. Students with additional needs are of course welcome to join these groups and will be provided with support as required.

This may be in the form of staff and/or peer awareness, personal support or developing strategies to build confidence before joining the group: any support will be arranged in liaison with the individual student concerned.

## **Student Consultation**

There is currently significant student representation on the College's Equality and Diversity Group. In relation to disability, students from this group have been involved in an accessibility project where able-bodied students accompanied students who use wheelchairs on a typical day around college to develop an understanding of the issues facing people with mobility difficulties.

Concerns identified through this exercise were passed to the College's Health and Safety Officer and Estates department, via the Equality and Diversity Group. There is also a specific post for Equality and Diversity rep on the College's Student Representative Committee.

## **Progression and Aspiration/Preparation for Adulthood/Careers**

Students attending Holy Cross are here for a relatively short period of time, usually only two or three years. Progression is, therefore, a focus for all our students in terms of planning for their next step.

Students with disabilities are supported in this process and offered additional opportunities to explore progression opportunities. For example, students with additional needs have been supported to effectively access the Higher Education Careers Convention held annually at the Exhibition Centre in Manchester. They have also been supported to visit university Open Days, or to investigate different types of support available in Higher Education. This year, several students were supported to visit a past student, who has significant disabilities, at her university.

This provided a chance to discuss the support she receives which has enabled her to live away from home and the issues she faces in this situation, as well as the opportunities it provides.

Students with disabilities are provided with information about how to access support at university. Assessment reports for students with dyslexia conform to

PATOSS/DSA standards and therefore provide the necessary evidence for this cohort of student to access support in Higher Education. Where other evidence is required, we are happy to advise students on the requirements and support them in obtaining this as far as possible.

