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**Disclosure of Disability to the University and
Reasonable Adjustments Procedures**

**Table of Contents**

[Definition of disability and reasonable adjustments 1](#_Toc63361250)

[Disclosure of a disability 1](#_Toc63361251)

[During the application process 1](#_Toc63361252)

[Disclosure during Registration 2](#_Toc63361253)

[Disclosure of Disability to other staff 2](#_Toc63361254)

[Official recognition of a student’s disability: Student Additional Requirements Agreement process 3](#_Toc63361255)

[Process for Supporting Students with Disabilities on Work Placement 4](#_Toc63361256)

[Assessing the needs of students with disabilities 4](#_Toc63361257)

[Making recommendations on adjustments 4](#_Toc63361258)

[Considering the adjustments 4](#_Toc63361259)

[Involving the placement 5](#_Toc63361260)

[Formalising reasonable adjustments 5](#_Toc63361261)

[Reviewing Adjustments 6](#_Toc63361262)

[Issues of competence 6](#_Toc63361263)

[Examples of reasonable adjustments 6](#_Toc63361264)

**Disclosure of Disability to the University and
Reasonable Adjustments Procedures**

Under the Equality Act 2010, universities are legally obliged to ensure disabled students are not discriminated against. The Act also imposes a duty on Universities to make reasonable adjustments[[1]](#footnote-1) to enable students to fully participate in their studies and work experience placements.

# Definition of disability and reasonable adjustments

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 specifies that: a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities4. ‘Physical or mental impairment’ includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. ‘Long term’ means that the impairment has lasted or is likely to last (may well last) for 12 months or more. ‘Substantial’ means more than minor or trivial.

Section 20 of the Act imposes a duty on universities to make reasonable adjustments for students in relation to:

* A provision, criterion or practice – including assessment practices
* Physical features – including access to assessment venues
* Auxiliary aids – including exam support such as hearing loops, exam scripts in large print or Braille, and human support such as readers, scribes and sign language interpreters.

# Disclosure of a disability

## During the application process

Students are invited to disclose any disability or additional need on their UCAS application form. Where a student does this, Admissions will send an email inviting the applicant to disclose their disability via a secure online form which can be found on the student’s ‘My Application Page’ (a secure portal to the applicant area of the University’s ChiView system).

Students may also disclose their conditions by contacting the DDS or Wellbeing services directly themselves and will be directed to the online form or, where the student has difficulties competing the online form may be sent a Word document version of the form (an ‘S1 - Disclosure Form’).

Once the student submits the online form the details are forwarded in pdf format to the Disability and Dyslexia Service.

Depending upon the nature of the condition disclosed, the form and any supporting evidence is passed to the Disability Advisor, Dyslexia Advisor or Wellbeing Mental Health Adviser (for students disclosing Mental Health conditions) as appropriate.

The Advisor will then begin a dialogue with the student over any necessary adjustments and to give the student information about possible support. In certain cases, where the needs are complex, students are invited in for a meeting with the Advisor. Depending upon the nature of the condition and adjustments required, a member of the relevant academic department may also be consulted. In most cases the student will be required to provide medical evidence to support their claims, for example a letter from the GP or other appropriate NHS service.

In the case of students with Dyslexia or other Specific Learning Difficulties, the student is required to provide an assessment carried out by a qualified professional. Where a student does not have this the DDS team may arrange an assessment after the applicant has registered for their course.

During this process, the applicant may discuss their requirements with regard to accommodation. If it is felt that a student requires priority for a particular type of accommodation (i.e. on-campus; ensuite etc) then the Advisor makes a recommendation to the Accommodation Allocations Team, using the Priority Accommodation online form. The agreed requirements are forwarded to the student by email who is then invited to consent to share the requirement with the Accommodation Allocations Team.

## Disclosure during Registration

Students are also invited to disclose a disability or additional need on their Registration forms. Where students make such a disclosure Academic Services forward details to the DDS team. The DDS team will then contact the student requesting further information and inviting them to meet with the relevant Advisor.

## Disclosure of Disability to other staff

Students may also disclose a disability or additional need to their tutors or Academic Advisors. Where this happens, the staff concerned should advise the student to make contact with the DDS service or Student Wellbeing, as appropriate. The student’s explicit consent should be sought in writing before passing any information on to a third party. Staff are advised to keep a record where a student refuses permission to make a referral to DDS/Wellbeing. Staff should also explain that the University will be unable to make adjustments for the disability or medical condition unless the student meets with the relevant Advisor (Disability, Dyslexia, Student Health or Wellbeing Mental Health).

# Official recognition of a student’s disability: Student Additional Requirements Agreement process

Once the Advisor has satisfactory evidence of the disability they will agree the necessary adjustments and support with the student. This information is logged on a Student Additional Requirements Agreement (SARA). This form details all adjustments needed for an individual, including teaching and learning, examinations, support needed from the DDS team etc. This SARA form then becomes the University’s agreement with the student as to how it will support them. This information is only shared with the appropriate Departments if the student gives their explicit consent. If the student is very concerned about the disclosure of their disability, the Advisor can agree to very limited information being added to the form.

The SARA form is processed by the DDS Team Administrator who will log the teaching and learning adjustments required by the student on the individual’s SITS database record. This will be accessible to the student’s tutors by clicking on the disability link on the individual student’s ChiView page which brings up details of the required support and adjustments for teaching, learning and assessment. This page will not contain details of the student’s disability. Requirements for adjustments to teaching and learning may include: physical access requirements; adjustments to handouts and course materials; human assistance required etc. Required exam adjustments are listed by the Examinations Department. Tutors are able to run reports on the adjustments necessary for all students on a particular module or course.

The SARA form is also sent to the appropriate Head of Department for their agreement. At this stage the Head of Department may raise any concerns about the adjustments recommended. Initial concerns may be discussed with the relevant Advisor. However, where there is continued disagreement it is advisable to discuss the issues with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Experience). Once agreement is reached the Head of Department is required to sign the SARA. A copy of the form should then be held in a confidential file for tutors to access.

N.B. It is possible that, in cases where details of the disability are sensitive, or where the student is very concerned about disclosure of the nature of the disability, the SARA form will contain limited details of the actual disability itself, but will simply log what adjustments are needed. In all cases full details of the students disability are kept by the DDS or Wellbeing team as appropriate.

# Process for Supporting Students with Disabilities on Work Placement

Where a student has a work experience placement as part of the course there will need to be an additional conversation between the student, the Placement Co-ordinator and the Disability Adviser as to who at the placement will be informed of the disability and what reasonable adjustments will be required.

# Assessing the needs of students with disabilities

The student should meet with the Disability Advisor well in advance of the placement process. In some cases, this meeting may take place during the course application process and before Registration. The Disability Advisor will discuss potential impact of the student’s disability and adjustments needed.

The student may be required to provide medical evidence, or evidence from an appropriate authority, verifying the disability. This information should be forwarded to the Disability and Dyslexia Team.

Where the student requires additional funding for reasonable adjustments on the placement, the Disability Advisor may contact the relevant funding body for the student’s Disabled Student Allowance (DSA).

Where the student has an Assessment of Need appointment at an Access Centre, the student should discuss the placement requirements with the assessor.

# Making recommendations on adjustments

The Disability Advisor and student will draft an outline of reasonable adjustments which a student requires. The student needs to be closely involved in identifying necessary adjustments.

The Disability Advisor will complete the Recommendations for Reasonable Adjustments on Work Experience form (RAWE). This will be signed by the student and verified by the Disability Advisor.

In the case of all teaching programmes, this form will be forwarded to the School Partnership Office for forwarding to the individual Head of School Partnership. In the case of other programmes, this form will be forwarded to the Head of Department and/or the Placement Co-ordinator. At this stage the student’s programme will need to consider whether there is any conflict between the adjustments recommended and the requirements of the course or awarding body.

# Considering the adjustments

In some cases, it may be necessary for the student, placement co-ordinator and Disability Advisor to meet and discuss the adjustments.

Where there is felt to be a conflict between the recommended adjustments and the course requirements, the academic staff will need to consider carefully whether the course requirements are discriminatory. At this point academic staff may need to clarify the matter with the Disability Advisor and, possibly, the qualification body (eg. TDA, GSCC etc) or the Occupational Health Consultants as appropriate. It is advisable that serious consideration is given before adjustment recommendations are rejected.

Once agreement is reached between the individual student, the Disability Advisor and the Academic personnel, all parties should sign the Recommendations for Reasonable Adjustments on Work Experience form.

# Involving the placement

It is good practice for the University Placement Co-ordinators, or Head of School Partnership, to consider the placement of students with disabilities early in the process as it may take time to plan and secure funding or equipment for adjustments.

In some cases, the reasonable adjustments required by the student may affect the choice of placement. Some students may need to minimise travel time, for example. In other cases, the reasonable adjustments may not be possible in certain placements, although all placements are expected to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of students. It is also worth noting at this point that a work placement could be acting illegally if they refuse to accept a student with a disability.

The University’s Placement Co-ordinator, or Head of School Partnership, and student will need to agree what information is to be released to the placement and who, at the placement, will have access to that information.

The placement contact will need to be involved early in the process to ensure adequate planning time for adjustments.

In some cases, it may be necessary for the student and the University’s Placement Co-ordinator, or Head of School Partnership, to arrange a pre-placement visit to look at access issues and to allow the student to familiarise themselves with the placement.

Additional necessary adjustments may be identified at this stage.

# Formalising reasonable adjustments

At this point the student, University’s Placement Co-ordinator/Head of School Partnership, and Placement Contact/ITT Co-ordinator/Professional Tutor, should document the agreed adjustments.

* On some courses (eg. Social Work, Youth and Community Studies etc) it may be possible to write the agreed adjustments into the Individual Placement Agreements that each student has.
* On courses which do not have such agreements such as the teaching courses, the Recommendations for Reasonable Adjustments on Work Experience form will be used as the agreement.

It is important that at this stage everyone involved is clear about:

* Exactly what adjustments are to be made.
* How any adjustments are to be funded if costs are involved.
* What action is to be taken if adjustments do not happen.
* Who will be informed about the disability at the placement.
* What systems are in place for maintaining communication between Practice Assessor, student, placement supervisor and Disability Advisor.

# Reviewing Adjustments

Adjustments need to be open to continual review. The student has a responsibility to alert the placement mentor and/or the University Link Tutor, or Placement Co-ordinator, at the earliest opportunity if adjustments are not working or not being carried out.

Informal reviews of the adjustments can and should take place regularly. A more formal review of adjustments should take place during any formal review visits by the University staff. This review should note any further necessary adjustments and identify who will be responsible for actions.

# Issues of competence

Practice Assessors need to raise any queries where there is confusion over whether concerns over performance are due to lack of competence or the effects of the disability. Disability and Academic staff need to provide advice where placement staff have difficulties with assessing students’ competence.

With questions on fitness to practice it is essential all reasonable adjustments have been made. Where Disability Staff, Academic Staff and the Placement are unable to reach agreement on the competence of students, it may be necessary to seek further advice from an Occupational Health Advisor or the qualifications body (TDA, GSCC etc).

# Examples of reasonable adjustments

There is no definitive list as to what might be considered a reasonable adjustment for a particular type of disability or condition. The adjustments needed by an individual will vary, depending on the nature of the work placement, the type and extent of disability, and the individual’s response to it.

Possible adjustments to work placements might include some of the following:

* Choosing placements with reduced travelling load on student (where student has issues around transport or tiredness due to medical condition).
* Pre-placement visits to familiarise student with physical environment, people etc. (useful for mobility difficulties, sensory impairments and some mental health conditions where there is increased levels of anxiety).
* Identifying placements with accessible environments.
* Identifying placements with minimal movement around building required.
* Timetabled flexible days (coming in later, working shorter days, making up time during academic holidays to ensure full placement is achieved).
* Timetabling classes to minimise movement between classes (teaching).
* Break in working week for rest/study (with days added on to end of placement to make up time).
* Access to regular breaks with agreement of practice supervisor and as appropriate to work load (useful for some medical and mental health conditions).
* Time off for medical visits (planned as much as possible around needs of workplace).
* Use of digital recorders to record meetings etc (Possibly used after meeting to create immediate record. Agreement of all parties needed and no names to be used. Recordings wiped after notes written up).
* Additional time to write up notes (Social Work).
* Use of student’s own lap-top with specialist software (would need forms and workplace software etc used to be loaded onto lap-top. Also need agreement that no data on clients taken home and other safeguards on confidentiality) (Social Work).
* Loading of work-related software onto student’s lap-top for duration of placement.
* Suitable chairs/desks/workstations etc (for some medical/health conditions).
* Practice assessor/admin support to proofread letters going out (Social Work).
* Support worker/interpreter/mobility assistant to attend with student.

This should by no means be seen as a prescriptive list of possible adjustments, but should be considered as examples of the range of adjustments that might be considered.

1. Reasonable adjustments are what the Equality Act 2010 calls any special facilities, assistive technology or support services which enable students to make the most of their studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)