

# Guidance on making reasonable adjustments for students and staff

*Revised October 2011*

## Preface

*"I would like to highly recommend this guide to you. Providing reasonable adjustments for our students and our staff is an essential part of ensuring we are accessible to all. Ensuring reasonable adjustments for students and staff is set out in law, as described below, but I would like to emphasise that this is good practice in any case and something we are committed to as a University.*

*"As we widen participation and respond to changing demographics, understanding and providing reasonable adjustments will underpin our ability to remain a top university with high aspirations for the future.*

*"This guide is substantive but allows individuals to navigate around it so you can find the information you need. I hope you will make best use of the information contained here."*

**Professor Jeremy Howells, University Diversity Champion**

*Dean of the Faculty of Business and Law*

## Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to offer advice, guidance and support to staff and managers in determining and agreeing reasonable adjustments for disabled students and staff. It is intended as a practical tool to identify the range of issues disabled people face and the kind of support the University can offer.

It is aimed at managers and teaching staff who need to determine and agree reasonable adjustments with disabled people who start work or study with the University, including staff who acquire a disability whilst in employment or studying here.

The guide contains comprehensive information and is hyperlinked in such a way as to allow an individual to move between sections to easily access the information needed for their own circumstances. It is not envisaged that the guide will need to be read in a linear way.

## Table of contents

Preface .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Table of contents .....	2
<b>Chapter 1: Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
The employment perspective .....	3
The student perspective .....	3
The legal perspective .....	4
<b>Chapter 2: The Law .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Previous legislation .....	5
The Public Sector Equality Duty .....	5
University of Southampton Equality Plan 2010-2013 .....	6
Special educational needs and the Equality Act 2010 .....	7
<b>Chapter 3: Reasonable adjustments .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Determining reasonable adjustments .....	11
The duty to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ .....	12
Assessing ‘reasonable’ .....	12
<b>Chapter 4: Employment issues .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Pre-employment .....	14
Designing job roles, job descriptions and person specifications .....	14
Positive action and proactive recruitment .....	16
Recruitment .....	16
During Employment .....	24
<b>Chapter 5: Student Issues.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Prior to Starting.....	29
Teaching and learning.....	29
Additional Support .....	45
<b>Chapter 6: Sources of advice and guidance .....</b>	<b>47</b>

To return quickly to this Table of Contents, hold down the Ctrl key and tap the Home key to return to the top of the document, and then press the Page Down key once or twice (it depends on how you are viewing the document).

## Chapter 1: Overview

In the UK there are:

- approximately 10 million disabled adults – around 1 in 6 of the population;
- 6.8 million disabled people are of working age with 3.3 million in work;
- Disabled people are five times as likely as non-disabled people to be out of work and claiming benefits;
- by 2010 40% of the UK population will be over 45 – the age at which incidence of disability increases;
- every year in the UK 30,000 people experience major injuries while at work, many of which may result in a permanent disability or ill-health condition;
- HESA estimate 57,750 or 8% of students are disabled;
- 6.6% of graduates in 2006-07 were disabled – 43% of who are dyslexic.

### The employment perspective

There is a strong ethical and business case for ensuring that reasonable adjustments are effectively in place for disabled people. Being seen as an employer who treats disabled people fairly means:

- the best people apply for jobs;
- organisations can keep employees who have valuable experience and knowledge if and when they become disabled;
- early ill-health retirements and sickness absence levels are reduced;
- staff morale is increased;
- organisations are less likely to experience claims of unlawful discrimination.

By encouraging disabled people to apply to work within the University, the organisation is able to gain access to a wider pool of talent. Different people bring a range of skills, abilities, experiences and potential that will ultimately benefit the organisation. Having a strong, balanced and well-motivated team leads to better performance and increased productivity. This ultimately leads to better customer service. Having a robust approach to disability will also have a positive and tangible impact on the University's brand. It can become an employer of choice as well as an academic institution, which is recognised and respected for the service offered to disabled students.

### The student perspective

From a student perspective, the Government has a clear objective of widening participation in education and specifically increasing the number of disabled students. The Government's *Higher Education in the Learning Society* report found it was essential to widen participation of disabled people in higher education for a number of key reasons. This included the need to enhance the opportunities for personal development, which would allow disabled people to enjoy a more rewarding life, to contribute fully to the economy and to be recognised for their capabilities and talents. This is underpinned by the University's [Access Agreement](#).

## The legal perspective

There is also a legal basis for facilitating disabled people's access to employment and study. The *Equality Act 2010* gives rights to disabled people protecting them from discrimination, unfair treatment and harassment throughout the employment and study relationship. The Equality Act also sets out the General Equality Duty, which applies to all public sector organisations.

# Chapter 2: The Law

## Previous legislation

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1995* has been revoked as parts of the *Equality Act 2010* were enacted. Much of the Act was revoked in October 2010, and the disability equality duty was revoked on 6 April 2011.

However, the Disability Discrimination Act continues to apply to any event occurring wholly before 1 October 2010.

Further to this, the disability equality duty has been replaced by the public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010.

## The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty, with which all public sector organisations must comply, in the Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and,
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act further states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to account for people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups and states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more differently than others.

The *Equality Act 2010* also provides protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of disability.

## Definition of Disability

A person has a disability *'if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'*.

'Substantial' is defined by the Act as *'more than minor or trivial'*.

An impairment is considered to have a long-term effect if:

- it has lasted for at least 12 months
- it is likely to last for at least 12 months, or
- it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person

Normal day-to-day activities are not defined in the Act, but examples could include eating, washing, walking or commuting, reading, writing or participating in a conversation.

Whether a person is disabled is generally determined by the effect the physical or mental impairment has on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (the exception to this is people with severe disfigurement).

People who have had a disability in the past are also protected against discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This may be particularly relevant for people with fluctuating and/or recurring impairments.

The Equality Act 2010 continues the existing duty upon higher education institutions to make reasonable adjustments for staff, students and service users in relation to:

- provisions, criteria or practices
- physical features
- auxiliary aids.

These adjustments apply where a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled people. It is important to note that with regard to direct discrimination, an institution can treat a disabled person favourably compared to a non-disabled person, and this would not amount to unlawful discrimination against a non-disabled person.

## Discrimination arising from disability

In addition to direct and indirect discrimination, people with a disability are also protected from discrimination arising from disability. Introduced in the Equality Act 2010, it replaces disability-related discrimination as previously found in the DDA.

This can occur when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their impairment and the treatment cannot be justified.

### *Example of discrimination arising from disability:*

A staff member takes a number of days off work for reasons arising from their impairment (for example ME). The institution does not have a disability absence/leave policy and therefore records all staff absence, whatever the reason, in one system.

The staff member is then disciplined for their high absence record, without the institution taking into account the disability-related absence/leave.

## Further Guidance

The Government Office for Disability Issues produced [extensive and useful guidance](#) on 'matters to take into account in determining questions relating to the definition of disability'.

## University of Southampton Equality Plan 2010-2013

The University of Southampton has produced an [Equality Plan](#), which includes its commitment to facilitating the participation of disabled students and staff and eliminating discrimination.

The University has adopted the social model of disability, which recognises that people are disabled because of the barriers society puts up; not because of their specific disability. With specific regard to disability equality, the University wants to ensure that it is an organisation that understands and embraces the social model of disability and has an inclusive approach to staff, students and the community. The University wants to be well known for its inclusive approach and that it positively encourages applications from disabled people and students and that those applications will be converted into appointments and placements.

## Special educational needs and the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 has subsumed the previous *Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act* (SENDA), which was also part IV of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Equality Act 2010 continues to ensure that disabled people have equal opportunities to benefit from and contribute to the learning services available in higher education institutions (amongst others). This covers applicants and potential students and it:

- protects disabled students on all types of courses;
- applies to a very broad range of activities;
- requires institutions to change their practice by anticipating the changes they need to make and being proactive in making them.

There are two main requirements that affect institutions:

- Responsible bodies must not treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person for reasons related to their disability.
- Responsible bodies are required by law to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a substantial disadvantage when compared with their peers.

It is now a requirement on every university to make reasonable adjustments for existing students with disabilities. Moreover, universities must make provision for future students, in terms of anticipating potential adjustments.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments arises where:

- a provision, criterion or practice, other than a competence standard, or
- any physical feature of premises

places the student at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled.

## Provision, criterion or practice

The duty to make adjustments will apply to:

- the arrangements an education provider makes for determining admissions to the institution,
- the student services provided for or offered to students,
- the arrangements for the conferment of qualifications by the institution.

## ***Physical features***

The duty to make adjustments will apply to any physical feature of premises that places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage when the disabled person:

- seeks admission;
- is a student;
- applies for a qualification; or
- holds a qualification.

Activities covered by the Act include:

- all aspects of teaching and learning, including lectures, lab work, field work, work placements, seminars, tutorials, meetings;
- research activities;
- e-learning, distance learning;
- examinations and assessment;
- learning resources such as libraries and computer facilities;
- welfare, counselling and other support services;
- catering, residential and leisure facilities;
- access to the built environment and its facilities.

## ***Admissions***

In relation to admissions, it is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements made for determining admissions to the institution;
- in the terms on which it offers to admit a disabled learner to the institution, or
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for their admission to the institution.

## ***Student Services***

In relation to ‘provision for students’, it is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a disabled student:

- in the student services it provides, or offers to provide, and
- by excluding them from the institution either permanently or temporarily because of their disability.

## ***Awarding qualifications***

In relation to qualifications awarded by the education provider, it is unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements which it makes for the purpose of awarding qualifications;
- in the terms on which it is prepared to award a qualification;
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to grant any application for a qualification; or
- by withdrawing a qualification from a disabled person or varying the terms on which they hold it.

The Act also makes it unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a disabled person after the relationship between the education provider and the disabled person has come to an end.

The legislation covers people who have been, but are no longer, disabled, and provides protection to non-disabled people from harassment by association (for example, the carer of a disabled person).

Where a condition is relieved by medication this does not mean that the person is no longer classed as disabled. The disability should be considered as if there were no medication. People with variable conditions, such as multiple sclerosis or sickle cell anaemia, are included under the definition of disability, and their needs may change over time. Where there is any doubt about the nature or extent of a condition, or whether it would meet the definition of disability under the, Equality Act 2010, an HE institution is entitled to seek further evidence of the condition.

## Enforcement

It is the employer's duty, under the law, to make reasonable adjustments when possible. If employees feel they have been discriminated against at work due to their disability, they can take a case to an employment tribunal – as with race and sex discrimination, there is no upper limit on compensation that can be awarded.

If an individual feels that he or she has been discriminated against. The Equalities Mediation Service (EMS) (formerly the Disability Conciliation Service, or DCS) may be able to help. This is an independent scheme for resolving disputes about discrimination in the provision of goods and services and in education and employment. This means, for example, that if you think it is difficult or impossible for you to use a shop, a bank, a pub, an airport, a school or a university course because of your disability, or if you feel you have been discriminated against by a service provider, school or university, or employer, you can try to resolve this through a mediation meeting with the organisation.

Originally the service was set up to cover disability discrimination, but it also now covers discrimination on the grounds of:

- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

You can use the service if you are an adult, or the parent of a child under eighteen.

This service is funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and could help to resolve a case before it is taken to court. If conciliation and mediation does not work, cases are dealt with by the civil court system.

An institution's governing body is the 'responsible body' and legally liable for the actions of the institution as a whole, and also for the actions of individual employees and agents – this includes visiting lecturers. Individual members of staff may also be held responsible for aiding an unlawful act if they knowingly discriminate against a disabled student or applicant.

All staff are expected to assist their institutions in complying with the law. In the case of teaching staff, this means being required 'to make reasonable adjustments to their teaching practice and teaching materials to ensure disabled students can participate in the learning environment'

Where potential or existing students believe they have been discriminated against on the grounds of their disability, they can make an application to the County Court.

The Codes of Practice are currently being updated. In the meantime, please refer to documents below.

For more guidance on the legal aspects of reasonable adjustments for students, read The Code of Practice for Providers of Post 16 Education and Related Services.

For more guidance on the legal aspects of reasonable adjustment in employment, read The Disability Discrimination Act 2004 Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation.

For more guidance on the provision of reasonable adjustments for goods, facilities and services read The Code of Practice - Rights of Access: services to the public, public authority functions, private clubs and premises.

## Chapter 3: Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment is any action which is taken arising out of the legal obligation to overcome disadvantage experienced by a person as a result of having a disability. Disadvantages may be caused by 'physical features' or by 'arrangements' and employers are required to take such steps, as it is reasonable for them to have to take in all the circumstances in order to remove that disadvantage.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments applies to all areas of employment including terms and conditions of service, interview and induction arrangements, and the offering or refusal of opportunity for training, promotion, transfer, benefits or dismissal.

In relation to students, a reasonable adjustment may be defined as an accommodation or alteration to existing admission arrangements, academic programmes, learning and teaching, student services, examination arrangements and rules relating to qualifications where these contain inherent barriers for students with disabilities. The implementation of a reasonable adjustment aims to allow students to access higher education without disadvantage within a framework of academic standards. There is however no duty to adjust a 'competence standard' to make allowance for a disability.

Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

**Physical adjustments:** for example, putting in a ramp for a wheelchair user, using contrasting coloured flooring to help people with visual impairments to see changes in floor level, or allocating parking spaces for use by disabled staff or students.

**Access to information:** for example, by ensuring the availability and use of appropriate ways to give and receive information such as being able to provide job descriptions in alternative media, accepting job applications in typescript rather than handwriting, or by modifying instructions or reference manuals.

**Access to opportunity:** for example, by making procedural/organisational adjustments such as changing a minor part of an employee's job description to allow him or her to continue working or to take up a transfer/promotion, or by offering flexible working hours, acquiring and modifying equipment, providing a reader or interpretation, changing a place of work or allowing absences for rehabilitation.

**Special study arrangements:** for example permitting flexible studying (where this is appropriate), modifying course materials and curriculum resources or allowing a disabled learner to suspend their studies for a period of time.

**Special examination arrangements:** for example allowing readers or the use of a computer, providing examination scripts in alternative fonts or using a different method of assessment for a disabled person or allowing a disabled person extra time to complete assessments.

### Determining reasonable adjustments

There are a number of steps which need to be considered when determining an adjustment, whether for employment, service provision or for a student. These include:

- is it known, or could it reasonably be expected to be known, that the individual has or might have a disability?
- what reasonable adjustments, if any, does the individual say they require?
- could a referral to Occupational Health, Enabling Services or Dyslexia Services provide additional information or advice?
- is additional advice required from any other specialist department, such as IT or outside agency?
- is the cost of the reasonable adjustment known, is it thought reasonable and is there outside funding available?
- has an application been made to Access to Work for funding employment adjustments?
- has an application been made for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)?
- what other adjustments might be possible or necessary which do not cost money?
- based on all of the information, is the adjustment considered to be reasonable?
- if the adjustments are considered reasonable, what steps need to be taken to put them into place and who needs to be involved? If they are not considered reasonable, what steps might be taken instead?
- what monitoring mechanisms need to be put into place to ensure the reasonable adjustments are working effectively and who might need to be involved in assessing the effectiveness?

## The duty to make *reasonable adjustments*

This duty arises when the University has to consider the need for an adjustment and take appropriate action when it becomes aware that a disabled person applies for employment or for admission to a course of study – or where an employee or student becomes disabled. In some cases a disabled person will request a particular adjustment, but this is not necessary in order for the University's duty to consider reasonable adjustments to apply.

The University also has an anticipatory duty to act in advance and make adjustments so as to remove any disadvantage that might reasonably be foreseen as likely to affect students or service users with disabilities. For example, it can reasonably be anticipated that each year a moderate number of students who are wheelchair users may be studying at the University - a wheelchair user may need to access the University campus and therefore ramps are provided into buildings.

## Assessing *reasonable*

There is no checklist against which judgments can be made to determine what is reasonable. The consideration of whether an adjustment is 'reasonable' is judged against:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment in preventing the disadvantage.
- The extent to which it is practicable for the University to make the adjustment.
- The cost and availability of resources including external assistance and finance.
- The extent to which making the adjustment would disrupt the University's activities.

Consultation between the responsible person and the individual at all stages is vital for a successful outcome. Records should be kept of all such discussions as it may also help avoid any claim of discrimination if reasonable adjustments cannot be made.

When assessing the implications of making 'reasonable adjustments' the ultimate guideline should be whether the proposal will enable an employee or potential employee with a disability to do the job effectively and to the standard required within the organisation. Equally, will the proposal enable a disabled student or potential student to achieve the required academic standards? In other words, for an adjustment to be reasonable, it should be effective. However, it is important to remember that an adjustment, which is effective, may not be considered reasonable (for example around issues of cost). Costly adjustments for employees are more likely to be thought 'reasonable' for employees who have or are likely to be in post for a substantial length of time.

In terms of the use of the organisation's financial resources for making adjustments, the 'reasonableness' of an adjustment will probably be evaluated against the resources available to the University as a whole. External funding could be a significant factor. The Access to Work Scheme can provide significant financial support to pay for the cost of reasonable adjustments in the workplace. Details of this scheme and the assistance available can be obtained by contacting the Disability Employment Adviser at Job Centre Plus. In relation to students, the availability of external finance such as Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a factor that may be taken into account, but will not be definitive. (DSA is not available for international students, for example).

## Chapter 4: Employment issues

This section covers employment and how to determine issues to consider and what a reasonable adjustment might be in a number of key areas.

### Pre-employment

This section looks at issues to consider before beginning the recruitment process. It considers how to design job roles, job descriptions and person specifications so as to avoid disability related discrimination. It also offers some guidance on positive action initiatives and pro-active recruitment opportunities.

### Designing job roles, job descriptions and person specifications

Some job roles may inadvertently discriminate against disabled people. For example, asking for a qualification, which is not directly related to the job, or for a driving licence when the job is not a driving job and for which other arrangements (i.e. reasonable adjustments) could be made.

It is good practice to continually review and update job descriptions and person specifications. The key question to ask is – does the job role really require this skill, qualification or experience? Can the task be completed in a different way? A common example of this is a job description that asks for a driving licence. In asking the question - what is the key requirement for this post? The answer is often the willingness or ability to travel rather than the need to drive. Requiring a driving licence will exclude, amongst others, applicants who are blind as well as some people with epilepsy. The reasonable adjustment in this situation could be providing a taxi, allowing additional time to travel by public transport or providing a support worker (see section for advice on covering some of the cost of a reasonable adjustment.)

Educational attainment can also be an area where discrimination can take place. Traditionally some disabled people have experienced significant barriers to accessing further and higher education opportunities. Some are therefore less likely to have higher-level qualifications. The question should be, is the level of qualification being sought for this position an essential requirement for the role? The test is whether the person can do the job and not whether they have a qualification unless that qualification is specifically related to the job role, e.g., a bookkeeping qualification for a finance post might be essential whereas simply asking for an 'A' level is likely to be too general and not related to the job.

The first step in recruitment has to be in the drafting of a job description for the vacancy. A common barrier for disabled people is including statements that are not actually part of the job which result in a 'wish list' more than an accurate job description. At best this could result in deterring an otherwise ideal candidate from applying, at worst it could lead to a claim of discriminatory practice being heard by an Employment Tribunal. This means that a careful and considered analysis of the job should be undertaken to ensure that discriminatory thinking and practices are excluded. Job descriptions should concentrate on outcomes which are about what is to be achieved in the job rather than how it is to be achieved, e.g., asking for 60 words

per minute typing is an input whereas stating that the job requires the candidate to input data onto a PC quickly and efficiently is an output.

The Health and Safety Executive has identified the job role and its demands as key contributory factors to some staff experiencing stress at work, which in some cases can lead to further mental health difficulties. It is important therefore to design a job, which has some flexibility to allow people to make choices and to ensure that unnecessary pressure is not placed on the employee.

Ideally the construction of job descriptions should be linked to a person specification and competencies strategy. Thoughtful use of these elements will provide an effective structure in ensuring that legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 are considered and fulfilled.

## Job descriptions

The job description should identify:

- The purpose of the job.
- How the job/post-holder fits into the structure of the organisation, to whom the post holder reports and for which staff they are responsible.
- The main duties and responsibilities of the post-holder. Where appropriate this should give objectives and targets.
- Associated tasks should be broken down into essential tasks and marginal tasks.
- The relationship between this job/post-holder and others inside and outside the organisation.
- What skills/abilities/knowledge/experiences are required and to what standard.

It is also useful to include a statement about the University's willingness to consider making adjustments to the job description.

## Person specifications

When developing person specifications taking into account the questions below would be good practice, and will help to avoid discriminating against disabled people. The key questions to ask are:

- Have ambiguous criteria been used?
- Have the required standards of competence been clearly and specifically described?
- Are all the criteria job related?
- Has the required experience stating the length, standard and level necessary for that specific job been described?
- Have education/qualifications been used when the test is whether candidates have the skills or abilities required to do the job?
- Have the required abilities in terms of the real requirements of the job been described using specific and justifiable terms?
- Have the outputs of the job rather than the inputs been described?
- Can the criteria used be justified?

Follow the link in the recruitment section of the University HR website for guidance notes on preparing job descriptions and person specifications. It can be found on the right hand side under "useful downloads".

## Positive action and proactive recruitment

It is legally possible to allow only disabled people to apply for a particular position. Although it is unlikely that anyone would wish to take this action for the majority of positions, it does mean that a candidate can be appointed because they have a disability, if it is felt that this would add value to the team.

As the University embraces diversity and seeks to ensure the workplace represents the community in which it works, ensuring disabled people have access to employment opportunities becomes increasingly important.

Rather than restrict applications to only disabled people, it may be desirable to choose actively to encourage applications from disabled people. This could be done by engaging in outreach activities, advertising in the specialist disability press such as [www.jobability.com](http://www.jobability.com) or in local community groups working with disabled people.

There are a number of positive action schemes in place across the University to support disabled people in or seeking to join the University. For example, the University operates a guaranteed interview scheme for disabled job applicants who fulfil all of the essential criteria from a person specification. This means that those applicants who meet each aspect of the essential criteria will be guaranteed an interview, even if they do not meet the desirable criteria. It is useful to shortlist initially and then return to the applications to identify any applicants who are claiming a guaranteed interview. This means that no applicant who would have passed the short-listing stage will miss out on the interview opportunity.

## Recruitment

This section covers the recruitment process from advertising the role and attracting candidates, through to short-listing and interviewing candidates. It also offers guidance on adjustments that may need to be made to recruitment activities. It offers guidance on medical questionnaires and health assessments and what to do with this information. Finally it covers making the job offer to a disabled person and issues around disclosing disability.

The five stages of recruitment are:

- Attraction
- Application
- Assessment
- Appointment
- Assimilation

### Attraction

#### ***Recruitment advertising good practice***

When advertising a vacancy, it is to attract and subsequently employ the best person for the position, be they disabled or non-disabled. It is vital, therefore, that the advertisement does not deter or discourage a potential disabled candidate. The advert itself should make it clear that applications from disabled people are welcome. Ideally, this could be supported and backed up with a statement saying that all disabled applicants who meet the minimum required criteria will be interviewed. It is also worth

considering an advertisement in a specialist publication, which will demonstrate a positive commitment and is more likely to encourage disabled people to apply.

Where advertisements are used, it is important to offer a range of ways of contacting the University, especially if the individual needs to discuss adjustments to the process. These might include email, telephone and minicom services.

It is also important to go beyond advertisements. Linking in with Job Centre Plus and the Disability Employment Adviser network is likely to attract more disabled people to apply. Contacting local disability groups may also raise the profile of the University as being an employer of choice for disabled people.

### *E-recruitment*

In an increasingly technological era, recruitment through the University website is becoming more popular. However, using e-recruitment should be within a range of options and not the only one being considered by the appointment panel. When using e-recruitment it is important to ensure that this method is accessible to disabled people. For example, is the website accessible for blind or visually impaired people or dyslexic people? Many other disabilities may be affected by the site's accessibility and usability, e.g., someone with a learning disability or autism. If application documents are to be downloaded, it is important to offer alternative formats. In particular, many screen readers for blind people do not interact well with the PDF file format. Offering the documentation in Word format is considered good practice.

### *Application*

Some applicants may not be able to use the University's standard procedures for making an application. For example a partially sighted candidate may require the application form to be supplied in large print or to be emailed in Word format. In practice, this means all information and application forms should be available in a variety of formats, which makes them accessible to all candidates as and when the need arises. Typically this might include large print, Braille, computer disk or audio file. In reality it may not be practicable to keep a stock of such things as application forms in a variety of accessible formats. Where this is the case, it is essential that potential candidates are informed, in the advertisement for example, that such information can be made available in an accessible format upon request. The important thing is to be aware of where and how to get such material transcribed quickly and accurately when requested. The solution could be as simple as printing a copy of the information in 16pt bold. To have documentation transcribed into Braille or large print, contact your Recruitment Advisor.

In addition, some disabled people will own personal computers and may well be able to convert such information themselves if provided with a copy on disk or via e-mail. The easiest way of determining what adjustments any candidate needs will be to ask them.

Also applications may be received in such formats but care should be taken to ensure this does not have an adverse impact on the candidate's assessment. Being flexible is of key importance, for example, for some disabled applicants, a reasonable adjustment might be to complete an application form over the phone.

## ***Short-listing***

Remember to follow the guidelines in relation to the guaranteed interview scheme – where applicants are claiming a guaranteed interview and they meet all of the essential criteria from the person specification, they should be included in the final short list of candidates. Equal opportunities monitoring data is collected separately for all candidates. This means it may not be apparent whether an applicant has a disability. However, where this is known or suspected it is important not to take it into account when making the short-listing decisions. It is sometimes easy to pre-judge whether an applicant would be able to do the job with their disability – but this is for discussion later in the recruitment process when reasonable adjustments are considered.

## **Assessment**

### ***Interviewing, including training for interviewers***

Most disabled people will need no extra assistance in order to attend an interview. For those who do it is important to give them the opportunity to explain what these might be. Because some people may have been reluctant to mention any disabilities on the application form, all applicants selected for interview should be asked if they require any specific adjustments to be made in order to be able to compete fairly at interview.

Reasonable adjustments are required if it is known, or could reasonably be expected to be known, that they are required. Where it is known there is a need for adjustments these should be discussed with the candidate prior to the interview.

Reasonable adjustments will vary according to an individual's particular needs. No two disabled people are likely to have exactly the same requirements even if they have the same disability. Disabled people are individuals, just like everyone else.

Illustrative adjustments might include:

- reserving an accessible car parking space;
- making an adjustment to the timing of the interview to avoid busy rush-hour traffic;
- allowing more time at interview;
- making sure that the venue for the interview is accessible to a candidate who has a mobility impairment or uses a wheelchair;
- ensuring that an accessible toilet is within an acceptable distance from the interview area;
- allowing an interpreter to accompany the candidate.

The key aspect in determining what adjustments are required is to ask the disabled applicant. The panel's role is then to work with that adjustment, as long as it is reasonable.

The following are some suggestions on the types of reasonable adjustments that may be requested. It is not intended as a definitive list, but rather for illustrative purposes.

### ***Applicants with mobility issues***

Ensure the interviews are being held in an accessible building so that any applicants who have mobility issues (but do not feel they have any special requirements and have therefore not made contact prior to the event) are able to access the room.

If it is known that an interviewee is a wheelchair user, it is good practice to remove the chair from the area where they will be sitting prior to the person entering the room. This means that the interviewee can come straight in to the room and settle in to position without the need to begin moving furniture.

### ***Applicants who are deaf and hard of hearing***

An interviewee may require a British Sign Language interpreter for their interview. It would be the responsibility of the University to identify a suitable interpreter and to pay the cost of this. If the person attending the interview is local, they may have their own preferred interpreter. If the interviewee has travelled from outside the area, they may not have access to their own interpreter. Either way, it is important to be able to source a local interpreter if this is required. Contact the University's recruitment advisor for assistance.

When using a sign language interpreter, it is important to continue to direct the questions and discussion to the interviewee, even though they will be watching and interacting with the interpreter.

Many deaf and hard of hearing people will rely on lip reading in an interview situation. It is therefore important to ensure that the room is well lit, background noise is kept to a minimum and the interviewee can clearly see all of the interviewers. Ensuring that only one person speaks at a time will ensure the interviewee is able to follow the discussion.

It is good practice to ask the interviewee if the practical aspects of the room layout meet their needs prior to the beginning of the interview.

Some hard of hearing applicants may require an acoustic loop system. Where this is indicated, the interview should be held in a room where such an aid can be provided.

### ***Applicants who are blind or visually impaired***

It would be good practice to offer to guide the blind person into the room and indicate to the person where the chair is. If appropriate explain where everyone in the room is sitting so that the person can orientate themselves.

If the blind person is accompanied by a guide dog, it is important not to be distracted by the presence of the dog. Once out of harness, the dog may move around the room, but the focus needs to remain on the person being interviewed.

### ***Applicants with dyspraxia and dyslexia***

Some dyslexic and dyspraxic applicants may find it difficult to process information in a cohesive way and may give disjointed answers to the questions asked. In this situation it may be possible to offer the interviewees more time to think about their answers and to write down their thoughts before giving the answer.

The important issue here is not to make judgements around the interviewees' ability to do the job based on the structure of their answers.

### ***Applicants with speech impairments***

It is important not to finish sentences for an interviewee with a speech impairment. Even if it is obvious what the person is trying to say, it is still important to respect that person's dignity and allow them to complete their sentence.

It is also important not to pretend to understand what the person has said if it is not clear, but indicate there is a problem. A good strategy is to ask if there is an alternative method that could be used; for example, writing down their answer. Another alternative is to ask shorter questions, which may make it easier for the person to answer.

### ***Applicants with a mental health issue***

Some applicants with mental health issues may find the interviewing environment an extremely stressful one. It may be appropriate to allow the interviewee additional time for their presentation or interview questions, particularly if they appear to become distressed.

Showing empathy and understanding with the interviewee and reassuring them that their anxiety will not be counted against them in determining the best applicant for the job may be reassuring.

### ***Making adjustments to tests and assessments***

There are likely to be situations when adjustments are needed to the tests and assessments used during the recruitment process. This is not about treating disabled people more favourably, but rather treating the person differently in order to treat them fairly. Examples may include:

- Allowing a dyslexic person or a person with a mental health issue a longer amount of time to complete a test
- Providing written information in font size 16 for visually impaired people
- For people with a speech impairment considering an alternative to asking the individual to make a presentation
- Allowing people who use specialist software to use this during an IT based test

The underlying issue is to ensure the test is necessary and directly relevant for determining whether a candidate is capable of undertaking the job.

## **Appointment**

### ***The selection decision and job offer***

All selection decisions should be based upon the abilities, experience and skills of the candidates. However, with a disabled candidate this comparison needs to be made after any reasonable adjustments have been taken into account. If a candidate has indicated a need for an adjustment to working arrangements, or the physical features of the working environment then it needs to be decided whether what has been requested is reasonable. One of the criteria to consider will be the cost implications of the adjustment and whether it is achievable within the framework of the business. However, this needs to be considered in the context of Access to Work funding which may make a contribution towards the cost of the reasonable adjustment. The key question is 'Can the candidate do the job after the adjustment has been made?'

In considering a request for reasonable adjustment the candidate should be involved throughout the exploratory process. Many disabled people will be able to suggest very simple practical solutions to what, to a non-disabled person, may seem quite insurmountable problems. In addition, it is important to remember that there may well be financial support for any adjustment via the Access to Work Scheme.

Access to Work is managed by Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs) They work with employers as well as disabled people and can be contacted through Job Centre Plus. It is important to ensure that all alternatives are explored. This strategy may also avoid a claim for discrimination in the rare instances where a reasonable adjustment is not possible. The effect of the adjustment should be taken into account when making the final selection decision. The best person for the position can then be appointed based upon their skills, experience and abilities.

Whilst much reference has been made to a disabled person's request for reasonable adjustment, in most cases the requests are minimal with minor cost implications and disruption. In fact recent research indicates that only 6% of disabled people in employment ever require any additional assistance, support or equipment. Throughout, it is important to take the advice of the occupational health team. Once the adjustments have been taken on board, they should be monitored with the Health and Safety advisor assigned to the faculty.

### ***Medical questionnaires and health examinations***

Note that, with effect from 1 October 2010, the University cannot ask job applicants questions about their health prior to deciding to whom a job offer will be made. The only exception is to enquire whether a person will need adjustments in relation to the recruitment arrangements, or to ask about something that is 'intrinsic to the job'.

An offer of employment can be made conditional upon confirmation that the person will be fit to do the job (subject to reasonable adjustments).

If it is normal practice to require all applicants to complete a medical questionnaire and undergo a health examination after an offer has been made, the same rules should be applied to the disabled applicant. However, medical history or past sickness absence levels are not always a reliable indicator of future work performance because past absences might relate to:

- a former employer's unwillingness to make reasonable adjustments;
- a "one off" illness in that year;
- a newly acquired or diagnosed disability which the person is now managing well
- time off for an operation from which the person has now recovered and which might well prevent future absences, e.g., hip replacement.

If applicants are referred to the occupational health advisor, ensure that the adviser is sent an up-to-date job description, listing the tasks the person is expected to carry out and the outputs required. The occupational health advisor needs to know the outputs required so that they can assess whether the applicant will have any difficulties with any particular parts of the job, or suggest reasonable adjustments.

Remember that making a reasonable adjustment can change the process by which these outputs are achieved. For example, it is not necessary to know whether someone can drive, but whether they are going to be able to travel between University sites. They might be able to do this by making an adjustment, e.g. using public transport, getting a taxi funded by Access to Work and so on. Always make sure that the disabled person is included in these conversations and ask them what adjustments they think they need. Do not necessarily, however, expect disabled people to be experts on any adjustments that might be needed.

If the person has been working recently, they might have a good idea about what works for them. If the person has a newly acquired disability or has not been in work recently they are unlikely to know what is available or possible in the workplace. Remember that advances in technology may mean that adjustments are possible now that were not available only a few years ago.

The key thing is to work with occupational health and the individual to identify the issues and what is a reasonable course of action in resolving them.

### ***Disclosure***

If uncertain about how a person with a particular disability would be able to carry out specific aspects of the job advertised do not be embarrassed to ask, but care needs to be taken in how this is done. It is perfectly acceptable to explain to a disabled person what outcomes are required in the job and ask them to explain how they will achieve them. The important thing is to avoid intrusive, rude or unnecessary questioning of a candidate just because they have a disability. It would, for example, be perfectly acceptable to ask a candidate with a mobility impairment how they would manage if the job normally required a great deal of time standing up. It would be totally unacceptable, however, to ask a person with a facial disfigurement questions pertaining to their disability when it has no bearing on their ability to carry out the job advertised.

## **Assimilation**

### ***Induction and starting employment***

This section covers the beginning of the employment relationship. It covers risk assessment and health and safety issues and how these relate to disability and reasonable adjustment. It also looks at ensuring reasonable adjustments are in place prior to the employee starting work and issues around dealing with how reasonable adjustments might impact on other members of the team.

### ***Risk assessment and health and safety issues***

It may be appropriate to undertake a risk assessment prior to a disabled person beginning employment with the University. This is not intended to single the individual out, but rather ensure that their safety and that of their colleagues is managed effectively. For example, an emergency evacuation plan may need to be put in place. The approach is always – as it is with all employees – to identify and subsequently manage the risks.

Where the right to reasonable adjustments conflicts with health and safety issues, it is health and safety legislation that takes precedence. However, expert advice must be taken in making this decision, as it is often too easy to assume that a potential or perceived health and safety issue might limit the University's ability to employ someone. It should also be considered whether alternative reasonable adjustments would remove the health and safety issue. Refer to HSE guidance on [undertaking risk assessment for a disabled person](#) and CLG guidance on [emergency evacuation involving a disabled person](#). For expert advice, talk to the Health and Safety advisor assigned to the faculty or professional service.

## ***Reasonable adjustments prior to commencing employment***

It is important to ensure that reasonable adjustments are in place, as far as possible, prior to the individual commencing employment with the University. If this is likely to delay the anticipated start date of the employee, contact the HR assistant as detailed in the contract offer.

The training needs of the individual should be considered for any adjustments that have been made. For example, if screen reader software has been purchased, does the individual require training in this package?

There may be a need to consult with other relevant people across the University to seek advice on making the adjustment. Sometimes the disabled person will not know all of the technology or equipment that is available. For example, if the reasonable adjustment involves the purchase of specialist IT equipment, it might be necessary to liaise with the IT department to ensure it is compatible with wider university systems.

## ***Other staff in the team***

How other staff in the team are involved will largely be dependent on the level of disclosure the new employee feels comfortable with. If they feel happy for the rest of the team to be made aware of their disability and for it to be disclosed, it would be appropriate to explain the situation before the person begins work with the team. This need not be overly formal and could be done during a team meeting. It could include the general effect of the person's disability (without going in to personal details), the reasonable adjustment that has been agreed and what the individual might need from other team members. Examples might include:

- a deaf person may need one nominated person to alert them to a fire alarm
- a blind person may be unable to perform some of the group's tasks, such as making drinks for the team
- needing understanding when someone with CFS is fatigued and unable to work late
- a person with a mental health issue may find it difficult to deal with some stressful situations

However, if the individual prefers not to disclose the nature of their disability, this needs to be respected. It is recommended that the issue be discussed with the disabled person and the reasons for discussing the issues with other members of the team explored. It might also go some way to reassuring the individual. Nevertheless, if the employee does not want any discussion of the issues, sensitivity will be needed regarding the impact any reasonable adjustments may have on the team – as they may not understand why the situation has occurred. For example, if flexible working arrangements have been agreed with a disabled person because their disability results in high levels of tiredness or the person finds it difficult to drive in the dark due to a visual impairment, there may be a degree of resentment from other team members if the same arrangement is not offered to them.

If a member of the team raises the issue, explain that there are sound reasons for agreeing the arrangement but that this is a confidential agreement with the individual.

It is important to monitor for any signs of bullying and harassment that the disabled person may experience from other members of the team. This may not be overt but could be subtle and still create pressure being placed on the individual. Although this is a difficult situation to manage, it should be kept in mind that the disabled person is the individual protected in law. If the situation becomes difficult, talk to the disabled person about the reasons why they do not want to disclose their disability and see if any of their concerns can be addressed. However, the person should not feel pressured to disclose if they feel uncomfortable with this.

Refer to the University's policy on Dignity at Work and Study for more information and support.

## During Employment

This section covers issues such as how to deal with the practical issues around reasonable adjustments and managing disabled employees. This may mean managing sickness absence and referrals to occupational health. It also offers guidance on dealing with performance issues, either related to the reasonable adjustment or unconnected to the employee's disability. The section covers how to ensure disabled team members are able to participate in training and development opportunities and promotion activities. Finally, it covers agreeing reasonable adjustments with staff who acquire a disability during employment.

It is important to monitor adjustments once they have been put in to place to ensure they are working effectively. If the adjustments do not appear to be working as effectively as they need to, initially discuss the issue with the disabled employee. Advice may also be needed from other sources of support across the University, such as Occupational Health, Health and Safety and iSolutions.

## Managing absence

A manager has the discretion to adapt the University sickness absence policy as a reasonable adjustment. For example, where the trigger points for managing absence are at four separate episodes in a 12-month period or any one period over 20 working days, that trigger point may be delayed. As each individual's disability is different, it is not possible to give guidance on what a reasonable trigger point might be. It should be discussed and agreed with the individual, taking in to account what is reasonable in all of the circumstances. However, it is important to clarify that a disabled person does not have an automatic right to a higher level of sickness absence. If this is agreed, it should be part of a clear set of reasonable adjustments.

Where there are concerns about the sickness absence levels of a disabled employee, having taken in to account any reasonable adjustments, managers will need to be able to deal with this situation. It is unfair on the individual, as well as other members of the team not to address the issue effectively.

The first question to ask is does the person have a disability? It could be that the individual has never considered themselves as disabled or their condition may be newly diagnosed. It is important to have this conversation, but it should be handled sensitively. The individual may not consider themselves disabled, even if they appear to fall within the definition. The focus of the conversation should be around the support

the individual requires rather than the label to be applied. A reasonable adjustment plan would then be agreed with the individual.

The employee may benefit from a period of home working, which may reduce the need to take sickness absence. Alternatively, the individual may need to adapt their contract of employment to work part time for a period of time – if this can be accommodated within the team. Potentially the employee could be offered a permanent reduction in their working hours, if they are unable to fulfil their existing employment contract. This should be discussed and agreed with the employee and HR.

An employee with a mental health issue may experience fluctuating symptoms and may go long periods of time without the need for absence from the work place. However, if symptoms do occur, the employee may require a period of absence from the workplace in order to stabilise their condition.

If the member of staff is returning to work from long-term sickness absence, a phased return to work may be appropriate. This could include working reduced hours for an agreed period of time, before they are able to return to their normal working arrangements. It is also important to build in a well-being induction, so that the individual feels well supported in their return. This is particularly important if the individual has been recently diagnosed with a disability or long-term health issue and is dealing with this as well as returning to work.

In all of these situations, it may be appropriate to involve specialist HR advice and Occupational Health. This is particularly the case if the level of sickness absence could lead to disciplinary action or dismissal.

For more information refer to the [Sickness Absence Management Guidance](#).

## Referral to Occupational Health

Before agreeing to a reasonable adjustment with a disabled employee, it may be appropriate to refer the individual to Occupational Health. Occupational Health will be able to advise on what might be reasonable in the circumstances, for example, whether the person is able to work full time or might benefit from adjusted hours, the likelihood of the attendance improving and so on.

If at any time the manager (or the individual) feels the reasonable adjustment is not working effectively, a referral may be appropriate. If the employee's sickness absence reaches an unacceptable level, it may also be appropriate to make a referral. The Occupational Health report will make a series of recommendations to help support the employee in the workplace. Do not be afraid to seek clarification or question the recommendations, through discussion with occupational health and the individual, if it seems they will be difficult to implement.

## Managing performance issues

If there are concerns about the performance standards of a disabled employee and this is unrelated to the disability or reasonable adjustment, the individual should be treated in exactly the same way as a non-disabled employee. If the performance issue is actually or potentially related to the person's disability, the first question is whether the reasonable adjustments are working effectively. The individual should be involved in this discussion to identify if there are any further adjustments that may be needed by them. It might also be necessary to involve other specialists such as iSolutions, Occupational Health and possibly outside agencies.

If all reasonable adjustments are in place and working as far as possible, but the individual is still unable to perform their job to a satisfactory standard, appropriate management action should be taken. The purpose of the reasonable adjustment is to allow the employee to meet the required performance standards. If this is not possible, action should be taken.

The actions open may include:

- agreeing reduced hours
- redeployment to an alternative role
- further training
- action planning and supervision
- ultimately, dismissal under the University policy

If more formal management action seems appropriate, it is important to seek specialist HR advice before doing so.

*Remember:* managers have the right and responsibility to manage situations effectively. Disabled employees have the right to reasonable adjustments and the responsibility to reach the expected performance standards.

## Ensuring access to, and participation in, training, development and promotion

Managers need to ensure that disabled staff have access to training and development opportunities in the same way as everyone else. This might require managers to liaise with the Staff Development department to agree the reasonable adjustments with the individual prior to the commencement of the training course. Training activities are also wider than attending training courses. It is important to ensure the disabled employee also has access to wider development opportunities, such as secondments, work shadowing and attending conferences.

Managers should not make the assumption that disabled people will be unable to undertake different work or work of a higher level. Managers should involve the individual in a discussion about their career objectives and the type of work they wish to pursue, together with the reasonable adjustments that may be required.

## Disclosure

The University is actively encouraging all disabled staff to formally declare whether they have a disability, to allow the organisation to understand the numbers of disabled people in the organisation and their needs. However, it is also important to recognise that not all employees will identify themselves as disabled, even if they fall within the definition of disability according to the DDA. Some disabled people do not declare their disability because they do not require any reasonable adjustment and therefore see no point in declaring. Also it is important to recognise that some staff will not declare a disability because they believe it will have a detrimental impact on their employment with the University, particularly their promotion opportunities. Where this exists, it is important to offer reassurance and support to staff to ease these concerns – not just so that staff feel comfortable in declaring a disability, but also so that they feel supported by the University.

## Agreeing reasonable adjustments for staff who acquire a disability during employment

Many people become disabled during their working lifetime and it has been common practice for a newly disabled employee to take early retirement on medical or health grounds. However, with the support of equality legislation and enlightened employers, more disabled people are choosing to stay on at work. As discussed earlier, employers have a responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for all disabled employees.

An important consideration for employers is the investment in time and money already spent on the training and career development of a person who becomes disabled. There is also the cost of medical retirement and the training of a new member of staff. All these costs mount up, and when balanced against the cost of making reasonable adjustments the retention of staff is frequently the most effective option. If the person cannot return to his or her original job there will often be the option of retraining or relocation within the University. It is important, therefore to offer the same levels of support to staff who acquire a disability during their employment.

A referral to Occupational Health is likely to be useful in this situation to help, with the employee, to identify the most appropriate reasonable adjustment in the circumstances. This is particularly important, as the employee may not fully understand the levels of support they may require or the adjustment that might be required in the circumstances. The adjustment may also mean changing aspects of the individual's job to take account of things they may not be able to do.

Redeployment may be considered appropriate if the individual is unable to undertake the main purpose of the job. For example, if an individual is diagnosed with epilepsy, they will be unable to drive. Firstly consider what reasonable adjustments may be available – for example if an employee is required to travel, but the ability to drive is not integral to the purpose of the job role, arranging alternative forms of transport may be appropriate. If driving is the core purpose of their role, considering redeployment will be appropriate.

## Costs and resources of reasonable adjustments

This section identifies the cost and resource implications related to reasonable adjustments. In particular it addresses the fact that many reasonable adjustments have no financial cost implications. The section also advises on how to make an Access to Work funding application to cover some of the cost of the reasonable adjustment.

Reasonable adjustments incurring no financial cost

It is important to remember that approximately 94% of reasonable adjustments incur no financial cost. These adjustments include such things as:

- attendance at medical appointments
- reallocating some aspects of the disabled person's job role
- facilitating some aspect of home working
- agreeing an evacuation plan

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

A small number of reasonable adjustments will have a financial cost. For example, this could be the purchase of specialist equipment or employing a support worker. Job Centre Plus operates a fund, which will contribute towards the cost of the reasonable adjustment. It may not cover the whole cost, as the University would be expected to make a contribution. In some situations (e.g. the provision of hearing aids) the individual may also be expected to make a personal contribution.

It is the individual who makes the application for the Access to Work funding, rather than the University although the University will need to be involved in the process. The Access to Work scheme can be used for one-off costs such as equipment but also for on-going costs such as a regular support worker or BSL interpreter.

More information is available from the [Job Centre Plus website](#).

## Additional Support

This section offers guidance on where to obtain further advice and support when dealing with reasonable adjustment issues relating to employment.

### ***Sources of internal advice and guidance***

Contact the University's Recruitment Advisors for advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments relating to the recruitment and selection.

Contact the HR Advisors for advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments on redeployment, performance issues and any other employment issues.

Contact Occupational Health for advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments on appointment and throughout the employment.

Procedures that could be useful include:

- Sickness/Absence Management guidance
- Redeployment Procedure

### ***Sources of external expert advice and guidance***

[Employment and Human Rights Commission](#)

# Chapter 5: Student Issues

## Prior to Starting

This section covers issues to consider prior to students beginning their studies with the University of Southampton and any adjustments that may need to be made to the student application process.

### The application process

In order to increase the number of disabled students studying at the University of Southampton, it is important to encourage applications from disabled people. This can be done through links with local voluntary disability groups, schools and colleges and the Disability Employment Advisors (Job Centre Plus), who may be working with disabled people considering return to study.

It is important to consider making adjustments to the application process, which may encourage more disabled people to apply, for example by ensuring that information on courses is available in a variety of formats. Providing a range of communication media is also likely to be helpful, ensuring disabled people can contact the faculty or Enabling Services to discuss any adjustments they may require by telephone, email and minicom. Encouraging disabled people to visit the campus to meet with members of staff at the faculty and to discuss their access requirements may also reassure disabled students that their needs will be met.

Adjustments may be required to the application process itself. For example, where tests, interviews or other forms of assessment are used as part of the application process, it would be appropriate to discuss any adjustments the individual may require and to put these into place, if they are considered reasonable.

It would not be usual to take a student's disability into account when making the decision on whether to offer a student a place at the University as this may be regarded as a breach of the Equality Act. However, there are a few situations when a student's disability may be taken into account. For example, a student's fitness to practise medicine or other healthcare related roles may be an issue. This is an extremely complex area of the law, as refusing a student access to a study place because of their disability may be seen as direct discrimination.

For advice and support in making this judgement, refer to the [Enabling Services](#) (previously Disability Services and Dyslexia Services).

## Teaching and learning

This section covers the main areas around teaching and learning and offers some guidance on the kind of issues to take into account when seeking to make reasonable adjustments for students.

The following sections are intended to provide some general guidance on reasonable adjustments teaching staff might consider in relation to disabled and dyslexic students. It is not intended as a comprehensive checklist, but as a series of guidelines as to what might be appropriate and it is not suggested that all ideas should be adopted. It should be noted that, in many cases, these recommendations reflect good teaching practice for all students.

Every individual is different and their needs will be specific to them. Assumptions should not be made that a student has a specific condition and will therefore have a pre-identified set of needs. It is key to this process is that the individual should be involved in discussions about their adjustment.

It is also important to remember that the University has an anticipatory duty to prevent disabled students from being disadvantaged. Therefore teaching staff should be giving consideration to many of these issues as a matter of course (such as the size of the font used on hand-outs) before any individual student makes a request for a reasonable adjustment. General points should be seen as good practice.

## Lectures

There are a number of practical considerations which need to be taken into account when planning or delivering lectures.

### *General support*

- Multi-sensory presentations appeal to all learning styles, particularly to those students who are visually impaired. A variety of presentation information is most useful. When preparing materials a consideration of the visibility of multi-media presentations such as the amount of information presented, the size of font and colour contrasts used is helpful.
- Students may benefit from making a personal recording of the lecture. If a student wants to record a lecture they should ask the lecturer in advance. Many students are reluctant to ask for this and it might be possible for one recording of the lectures to be made which can be shared.
- If students have a note taker attending the lecturer with them, it is important to ensure the note taker has everything he or she needs. It may be useful to provide notes in advance to this person to ensure the context is understood. It would also be useful at the end of the lecture to check if clarification is needed on any of the points. Notifications of changes to the time and location of a class should be communicated in a variety of ways, including electronic.

### *Students with mobility issues*

- Ensure the venue for a lecture is accessible for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Remember that modern electric wheelchairs are often larger and will therefore require wider access. There should also be an area in the lecture theatre or seminar room for the wheelchair to be located. It might also be useful to have a number of seats reserved for students with limited mobility to ensure they can get a seat.

### ***Deaf or hearing impaired students***

- Try to face any students who are lip reading; if turning to write on a white board, stop speaking so that those lip reading do not miss what is said. Use clear, but not exaggerated speech, making sure that the mouth is not covered. Ensure that the room is well lit and avoid standing in front of a window or light, which would make it more difficult to lip-read.
- If passing on complex or numerical information, it may be appropriate to provide the information in written form for deaf or hearing-impaired students. Writing unfamiliar vocabulary on a board can help lip readers, as well as students who struggle with spelling.
- Where acoustic loops are fitted to teaching rooms, these should be tested to ensure they are working effectively prior to the start of a lecture.
- Some deaf students may attend lectures with a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. It is important to ensure that the BSL interpreter and the deaf student are seated appropriately – so that the BSL interpreter can hear the lecturer and the deaf student can see the interpreter. The pace of the lecture may need to be slowed down to ensure the BSL interpreter can translate effectively for the deaf student. It is normal for two BSL interpreters to work together.

### ***Students with visual impairments***

- Providing an explanation of any visual material will be necessary for visually impaired students; providing the information to the student in advance in an accessible format may be beneficial.
- Blind students who attend lectures with a guide dog will need to be accommodated in the lecture theatre.
- When writing on a whiteboard it is helpful to check that everyone can distinguish between red and green.

### ***Students with specific learning difficulties***

- Students are likely to benefit from reading lists including reference or shelf numbers if possible.
- Glossaries, where appropriate, may also be useful.

### ***Students with mental health conditions***

- Students may benefit from a supporter being in the lecture with them to provide emotional support, and this person needs to be accommodated.

## **Handouts**

### ***General support***

- Handouts should be made available electronically in advance if at all possible. This will allow students to print out the handouts in any format they find helpful. The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Blackboard can be used for this purpose.
- As an alternative, lecturers could email handouts to disabled students in advance of the lecture.

## ***Students with visual impairments***

- Large print copies for visually impaired students should be at least 16-18 point and in a sans serif font although this should be checked with the student as needs and solutions vary.
- Presentations provided electronically should be converted into accessible formats; this usually means Word or PowerPoint. Students can experience difficulties in altering formats of a document. Further information can be found on the [LexDis website](#).

## ***Dyslexic students***

The following is based on the [British Dyslexia Association's](#) suggestions for accessibility of information:

- Ensuring good colour contrast between text and background colours;
- Avoiding light text on a dark background;
- Using off-white or pale coloured paper instead of white, which can cause glare. Using matt paper can reduce this impact;
- Using clear language and short paragraphs;
- Allowing sufficient space between paragraphs, together with wide margins and headings. Bullet points or numbers rather than continuous prose can be helpful. Left hand justified text makes print easier to read;
- Bold is easier to read than italics or underlining which can make the words run together;
- Using a clear font of at least 11 points.

## **Tutorials and seminars**

### ***General support***

- Try to provide discussion materials in advance, preferably in an electronic format, unless research skills are being tested.
- Students may request to make a sound recording of the tutorial, when appropriate, if they find note taking difficult. Ethical or confidentiality issues may need to be addressed as a group and any objections of other students taken into account.
- Some students may be accompanied by note-takers or a supporter. Payment for this is sometimes available as part of the DSA.
- Dyslexic, dyspraxic and pre-lingually deaf students may appreciate a short ten-minute tutorial before the start of an important assignment. An initial tutorial might allow students the opportunity to discuss an A4 outline of their ideas. This ensures the student does not misinterpret the language of the essay / task title. A second tutorial might allow students to show the tutor a brief sample of the writing – again to reassure students that they are on the right lines.
- A written note of the targets set or next steps agreed might be useful.
- Tutors should try to give oral as well as written feedback where this would be helpful.

## ***Students with visual impairments***

- In order to allow students to orientate themselves at the beginning of the session, all group members should introduce themselves.

- If appropriate the lecturer should describe the layout of the room. This should be handled sensitively; for example, the student may have attended the session with a friend who has already explained key risks in the room.
- Each person should state his or her name when making a contribution.
- Any information which is to be used or referred to during the seminar should be provided in an accessible format to students electronically in advance of the session to allow them to prepare.

### ***Students with a hearing impairment***

- Where possible, the chairs should be arranged in a horseshoe configuration so students can all see each other. This is particularly important for any student who lip-reads.
- In group discussions, only one person should be allowed to speak at a time.
- It would be useful if references to literature and key terminology were written down as well as given orally.

### ***Dyslexic students***

- Students should not be asked to read aloud (particularly without prior preparation) unless it is an essential component of the course.

## **Coursework**

### ***General support***

- Access to samples of previous work with appropriate grading will help students know what is expected of them.
- Specific assignment instructions with clear unambiguous language should be given.
- Assignment deadlines given out at the start of the course if possible.
- Staggered deadlines for assignments as far as possible, particularly for joint courses.
- It is not generally advisable to grant automatic extensions but faculties are asked to consider extensions supported by a good case through their Special Considerations processes, as with all extenuating circumstances. Specific learning difficulties are not generally considered as a sole justification for extension. Multiple extensions could lead to additional problems for some students. Extensions for extenuating circumstances should be supported by a practitioner within Enabling Services.
- Consider use of alternative forms of assessment if appropriate. (Please refer to the chapter on assessment for further guidance).
- Written as well as oral essay feedback should be given (preferably in a word processed format).

### ***Dyslexic students***

- Access to a copy of the written comments should be available so that students can see how to improve their work. Dyslexic students could discuss specific aspects with their dyslexia tutors with a view to addressing any identified skills weaknesses.

- It should be noted that dyslexia tutors do not make any comments on subject content. They can, however, provide individual tutorials to help students develop editing and proof reading skills. Students can bring drafts of assignments to Enabling Services and a dyslexia tutor can read the work aloud to the student who can ‘hear’ that what is written is what s/he meant to say. Appropriate changes can then be made to the draft before the student hands in the work.
- It is not part of University policy to make any ‘allowances’ in the marking of dyslexic students’ work. Although exam scripts are flagged, coursework is not. Dyslexic students’ coursework should be marked in exactly the same way as that of other students. Reasonable adjustments should be put in place before the work is handed in, either through dyslexia tutorials as above, or by the use of appropriate technology, such as proof reading or voice activated software programmes.
- Many students will be eligible to receive the [Disabled Students’ Allowance](#) (DSA), which will pay for tutorials. Students also have access to facilities provided by the [Assistive Technology Service](#).

### ***Students with visual impairment***

- For students using screen reader software, it is appropriate to provide the coursework in Word or plain-text format, to allow this to interact with the software.

### **Practical and laboratory-based classes**

- A health and safety risk assessment of the space and activities undertaken by the student may be required. Enabling Services can provide further assistance here.
- There should be an option for students to record log book material in an alternative format e.g. electronic format.
- Consideration will need to be given to how the student can develop the appropriate skills and pass this element of their course, if they are unable to perform the practical activity. (Please refer to the section on fitness to practise, should this apply.)

### **Placements**

Students who may spend time outside the University in a work-based placement will also be entitled to ‘reasonable adjustments’ to be made by the placement provider. Disabled and dyslexic students are entitled to expect some form of reasonable adjustment in the work place as they will when they qualify. The University at the same time is responsible for ensuring that professional standards are met. Although the law clearly states that there is a requirement in both education and the workplace to provide reasonable adjustments it is difficult to establish what is reasonable in the different settings. Any adjustments provided will need to be balanced with the need to demonstrate skills and competencies necessary for different professions.

Disabled and dyslexic students on placement have to demonstrate the necessary skills and competencies to show that they are fit to practise in the particular profession. They are also entitled to reasonable adjustments to help them reach the required standard. However, if they do not manage to achieve the level required for the profession, despite appropriate support in place, they will not be able to complete the placement successfully.

Any reasonable adjustments that have been put in place prior to the student going on placement will need to be re-examined in the light of the appropriateness for placement. It is important to remember, however, that what would be considered reasonable within the academic setting might not be appropriate in the workplace.

Where a student is commencing a work placement, the University should assess the placement provider in advance to identify any particular issues that the disabled student may face whilst on placement. This may involve communicating clear information about the student's disability and needs to the placement provider, (with the student's consent). The University should then, work closely with the placement organisation and the individual student to establish what the student's needs will be whilst on placement and how any potential issues can be overcome.

### ***General support***

- Ensure a discussion of placement activities with the student and the placement supervisor in advance in order to identify any appropriate adjustments that might need to be made. An initial meeting could be arranged prior to placement. Consideration should be given as to what strategies are in place should anything unexpected happen.
- Ensure a discussion of any health and safety issues and, if necessary, undertake a health and safety risk assessment in advance of the placement commencing with the individual student and the placement supervisor.
- Consideration of appropriate placement destinations would be useful for some disabled students. For example, wheelchair users will need to be assured that the physical access to the building is suitable for their needs.
- Regular review meetings with the student and placement supervisors to see how things are going and to address any issues or concerns are essential.
- Consider extra time or practice at the beginning of placements to become familiar with routines and procedures, or extra supervisory sessions at beginning of placements. This may include extra time to read and complete paperwork.
- Instructions should be provided in bite-size chunks if at all possible. It would also be appropriate to provide key information in written as well as oral format.
- An information checklist outlining what the student needs to do to prepare for the placement and any items they need to bring would be useful for both the student and placement supervisor. Such placement plans should use highlighting and colour for emphasis. A checklist of essential terminology is also likely to be useful for some disabled students.
- Students with a mental health condition may find a placement unsettling, as they are being removed from their normal environment. Providing briefing materials and emotional support (such as talking through the students concerns) is likely to mitigate these issues.

## Field trips

### *General support*

- Ensure a discussion around the field trip activities with the student in advance of the trip to identify any adjustments that need to be made. Discuss any health and safety issues and, if appropriate, undertake a risk assessment in advance of the trip which should include consideration of what strategies are in place should anything unexpected happen.
- In some cases it will be appropriate to ask the student for medical clearance before they go on the field trip.
- Some students (for example those with Asperger's Syndrome or some mental health conditions) may find room sharing difficult because of their specific difficulties and in some cases it might be necessary to arrange separate accommodation.
- Consider a choice of field trip destinations if appropriate so the student can opt for the trip/activity that is most suitable.
- Prepare an information checklist outlining what the student needs to do to prepare for the trip and any items they need to bring. This could include a checklist of key subject words and place names. This may include pre-reading in advance to allow students to prepare. All such information and instructions should be provided both verbally and in writing.
- Extra time may need to be provided to complete notebooks.
- A debriefing feedback session in the evening could be useful.
- Some students might find personal organisers, electronic notebooks and/or talking calculators helpful aids.
- Some students may be accompanied by a Learning Support Assistant; payment is sometimes available as part of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).
- If the placement is a compulsory element of the course then the student's funding body may agree to contribute towards the costs of any adjustments from the student's DSA where appropriate; for example, paying for a note taker or transport costs.
- Students with a mental health condition may find a field trip unsettling, as they are being removed from their normal environment. Providing briefing materials and emotional support (such as talking through the students concerns) is likely to mitigate these issues.

### *Assessment*

This section covers issues around assessment and the reasonable adjustments that may be considered appropriate or allowable in some circumstances. It also offers guidance on meeting academic standards through the support of reasonable adjustments and when fitness to practice issues may be taken into account.

## *Examinations policy*

Special examination arrangements are for disabled and dyslexic students and are separate from Special Considerations. A disabled or dyslexic student for whom special examination arrangements apply might still be eligible to receive extra consideration under the Special Considerations policy if the student's disability results in additional difficulties which had not already been foreseen or where an additional temporary condition/disability occurs which affects the examination process. If, however, the condition is exacerbated by the assessment process this would be considered under the Examinations policy. If students do not have a recognised disability but require special examination arrangements these requests would fall under the Special Considerations policy. This should be supported by a practitioner statement from the Enabling Services as well as additional evidence e.g. G.P. note.

The Examinations policy for disabled and dyslexic students is intended to consider reasonable adjustments for assessments undertaken under timed conditions only. Other assessments are not covered. The University considers that reasonable adjustments for assessed coursework should largely take place before coursework is handed in. Alternatively, faculties might consider alternative forms of assessment when appropriate.

A flexible policy of recommendations for special arrangements for examinations is adhered to in order to ensure that no student is disadvantaged because of his/her specific needs and that the University's legal obligations are met.

The University Enabling Services are responsible for making appropriate recommendations for special examination arrangements concerning individual students: contact Enabling Services for further information

It is the responsibility of the Faculty Examination Officer to organise the facilities required in liaison with the University Central Examinations Office. Any additional costs are not charged to the individual student.

Special examination arrangements will apply to all examinations and in-house assessments, as well as practical examinations where appropriate. It is recognised that, in some faculties, professional regulations will not allow special examination arrangements for some practical examinations.

It is important to ascertain the student's current needs. Although a student may previously have received special examination arrangements this does not provide sufficient grounds for making similar arrangements at HE level. Any consideration of special arrangements at university level must take into account the student's current capability, and the demands of the programme of study.

It is important that the student's needs are assessed as soon as possible during the academic year. Students with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia/dyspraxia) are seen by the Enabling Services after arrival at the University. Students with disabilities are assessed, where appropriate, during the Admissions process. However, students' needs will be assessed throughout the year. A number of registration events run through the first two weeks of term, students who have disclosed prior to arriving at the University will have been sent information and should be encouraged to make contact as soon as possible.

In the case of 'standard' recommendations, such as 25% extra time: the relevant Enabling Service will enter these onto Banner without prior consultation with the faculty. The faculty will be sent information about the recommendations for each student. If, however, the special examination arrangements are more complex the Enabling Service will contact the faculty in the first instance and any recommendations will be negotiated and agreed with the faculty before the information is put onto Banner. It is recognised that in a few cases, the professional body requirements associated with some courses (e.g. Health Professions) may preclude the application of these recommendations.

In each case students will be expected to produce documentary evidence of their disability or specific learning difficulty. In the case of students with disabilities or mental health difficulties this will take the form of a letter from the student's GP, consultant or other relevant health professional.

In the case of the students with specific learning difficulties this will take the form of a full diagnostic educational assessment report (post 16 years of age) by either an Educational Psychologist or an appropriate Specialist Dyslexia Tutor. (Reports for GCSE or A level examination arrangements or screening assessment reports are not acceptable.) Students will need to provide a copy of the assessment report to the Enabling Services who will make a decision about whether the report is appropriate. Enabling Services will organise an updated assessment for the student if necessary. If this is not possible before the University deadline and there is clear evidence of dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties interim recommendations can be put in place.

Central Examinations Office will inform Faculties and Enabling Services of the deadline by which students must make themselves known to Enabling Services, and also the date by which all recommendations should be received. In exceptional circumstances, however, Central Examinations Office will try to accommodate students' needs after the agreed deadline but it will not be possible to guarantee this.

A flexible approach to need can be made by considering one or more of the following arrangements. Some students may require a combination of provision.

#### Standard recommendations

- 25% extra time in an Additional Exam Requirements room
- Identification of scripts by a coloured sticker, to ensure that in 'anonymous marking' a dyslexic student or a student with other specific learning difficulties is not penalised for typical dyslexic spelling and syntax errors.

#### Other recommendations:

- Examinations in-faculty with rest breaks of up to 10 minutes per hour.
- Use of a computer (which has been checked to ensure that it is 'clean'), in a separate room.
- A separate room alone with an invigilator.
- An agreement that in exceptional circumstances some students, depending on need, may require additional time allowances to be negotiated by the appropriate support service with the Faculty Examinations Office (or designated staff member) in liaison with the University Central Examinations Office.
- A reader

- A scribe – usually with extra time in a separate room
- Papers provided in alternative formats e.g. enlarged font, specific typeface or Braille.
- A recording of the examination paper in a separate room – sometimes with the provision of some extra time to account for the manipulation of the machine.
- Use of a recorder to produce spoken responses, which are later, transcribed into text by a typist for marking (arrangements should be made for the student to review the typescript to check for errors before marking).
- Use of a computer with voice-activated software and additional extra time, depending on the expertise of the user. N.B. This will be on the student's own computer because of the nature of the software. The computer will need to be checked to ensure that it is 'clean'.
- Provision of rest periods in excess of ten minutes per hour. Rest periods would be provided in addition to any extra time arrangements.
- Where examinations exceed three hours because of additional time, consideration may be given to offering the examination in two or more parts (e.g. morning and afternoon, or on two successive days) in order to reduce any disadvantage to the student due to the effects of fatigue.
- For students who are prone to fatigue, Faculties may be asked to make independent arrangements so that examinations are spaced with at least one day's rest between them, in order to avoid the effects of physical fatigue.
- Alternative timing to provide for a late or early start according to individual needs.
- Extra time for printing out answers prepared on a computer.
- Smaller venue (up to 6 people).
- Option to sit exams at home or in halls in the presence of a member of Education Support staff in addition to the invigilator e.g. the student's mentor.
- Option for student sitting exams in-faculty to have a member of Education Support Services present in addition to the invigilator, e.g. the student's mentor.
- Provision of an ergonomic chair, height adjustable desk or other item of specialist equipment.
- In exceptional cases, alternative assessments might need to be arranged where there is an alternative method available for assessing the competency being examined e.g. take-home exams, essays to complete in the examination period, option of a viva instead of written examinations or an informal post-examination viva.

The University is not obliged to adjust its expected standards of academic achievement. However, the arrangements that the University makes for assessing its students, such as examinations, may have to be adjusted to accommodate students with disabilities.

## Meeting academic standards

### *Fitness to Practise*

Some courses may present fitness to practise issues for disabled students. It is important to understand and follow the appropriate professional body guidance in terms of making fitness to practise decisions, particularly if this will affect the individual's ability to graduate from the course.

## General Medical Council guidance and disabled people in medicine

It is important to differentiate between disability and ill-health in relation to fitness to practise. Having an impairment does not mean that a person is in a permanent state of poor health. However, it must be recognised that the term 'disabled person' in the Equality Act covers people with long-term health conditions, and that means they may be protected by legislation.

A disabled person can be in good or poor health. Some impairments, such as HIV or AIDS, can also be infectious. Other conditions can fluctuate or deteriorate which may affect performance.

Medical Students: Professional behaviour and fitness to practise, published in 2007 by the GMC and the Medical Schools Council sets out how medical students are expected to behave, bearing Good Medical Practice in mind.

In particular, that guidance says that:

- students should be willing to be referred for treatment and to engage in any recommended treatment programmes.
- students do not have to perform exposure prone procedures in order to achieve the expectations set out in Tomorrow's Doctors; students with blood-borne viruses can study medicine but they may have restrictions on their clinical placements and will need to limit their medical practice when they graduate.

As long as they meet the University's regulations, anyone can graduate provided that they meet all the outcomes and curriculum requirements in these recommendations. The GMC's view is that students with a wide range of disabilities or health conditions can achieve the set standards of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. Each case is different and has to be viewed on its merits. The safety of the public must always take priority.

The GMC guidance Medical students: professional behaviour and fitness to practise states that in order to demonstrate that a medical student is fit to practise, they should:

- accept that they may not be able to assess their own health, and be willing to be referred for treatment and to engage in any recommended treatment programmes;
- protect patients, colleagues and themselves by being immunised against common serious communicable diseases if vaccines are available;
- not rely on their own or another student's assessment of the risk posed to patients by their health, and should seek advice, when necessary, from a qualified clinician or other qualified healthcare professional;
- be aware that medical graduates must let it be known if their health poses a risk to patients or the public.

## Nursing and Midwifery Council guidance on good health

The Equality Act 2010 protects people with a wide range of disabilities and health conditions from unfair discrimination. The Acts also state that organisations, such as the NMC, have a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' to policies, practices, procedures and to physical access to ensure that disabled people are treated fairly.

The NMC does not have a 'list' of acceptable or unacceptable health conditions. If a disability or health condition is declared the case will be considered on an individual basis to determine whether fitness to practise is impaired.

Good health is necessary to undertake practice as a nurse or midwife. Good health means capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition. Many disabled people and those with long-term health conditions are able to practise with or without adjustments to support their practice.

Long-term conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes or depression can be well managed and would then not be incompatible with registration.

The overriding concern in considering 'reasonable adjustments' will be whether a nurse, midwife or specialist community public health nurse is capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. The University will need to consider how reasonable any adjustments would be to support a person's capability for safe and effective practice and make a decision about providing them.

As part of the selection processes, the student's disabilities or health condition will have been considered and, based on occupational health advice, a decision made as to their capability for safe and effective practice. Any reasonable adjustments should have been taken into account when offering the student a place on the programme.

Throughout the programme the relevant faculty's 'fitness to practise panel' would consider any significant change in the student's disability, or health condition, and make a decision related to their ability to continue on the programme. In their final placement a sign-off mentor will have declare whether the student has successfully gained the standards of proficiency required by the NMC for registration.

When the student applies for registration, and the university is aware that issues exist that may impact on their good health, and where the university is not content to sign the student's supporting declaration, the NMC advises that:

- the nursing programme leader (pre-registration nursing and SCPHN programmes) or the lead midwife for education (midwifery programmes) should confirm to the NMC that the student has successfully completed the programme through the university's established processes;
- the supporting declaration of good health and good character should be returned to the NMC unsigned, and be clearly marked that the nursing programme leader or lead midwife for education is unable to sign it;
- they must advise the student of any actions taken and inform them that if they apply for registration they must declare any disabilities or health conditions that might impact on their fitness to practise.

#### [The Health Professions Council guidance for disabled health professionals](#)

The Health Professions Council (HPC) regulates health professionals such as biomedical scientists, podiatrists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. The HPC sets standards for training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The HPC is very clear about its obligations to ensure that all processes are fair and do not discriminate against disabled people. It is essential that all students who complete a course have the “skills, knowledge, character and health to practice their profession safely and effectively” and to meet the professional standards. The HPC do not publish ‘approved’ ways of meeting the standards and state that registered health professionals should make adjustments in their own practice. It is the responsibility of the applicant and the University to negotiate appropriate reasonable adjustments.

*“We believe that individuals know most about what they can and cannot do and that universities are the best source of information about how can deliver a course to make sure that the disabled student still meets the standards.”*

The HPC acknowledges that in some cases disability might prevent individuals from registering but it is very clear that decisions are based on the individuals’ ability to meet the professional needs and practise safely.

The HPC offers clear advice to admissions tutors about fitness to practise issues and stresses the importance of treating each case individually and avoiding stereotyping and making judgements about a student’s disability. Admissions tutors should not make assumptions about whether students are likely to be employed at the end of the course because of their disabilities. Similarly, HPC advise universities not to make judgements about disabilities when arranging practice placements. Universities should provide placements, which give disabled students the best chance of demonstrating their fitness to practise.

*“Some disabled students may not be able to complete certain types of practice placements but there may be other placements in which they would be able to learn and practise successfully.”*

The HPC advise students to declare their disabilities so that placement staff have the opportunity to arrange the necessary support and adjustments to enable the students to practise safely.

More information can be found on the Health Professions [website](#), and in the brochure “A disabled person’s guide to becoming a health professional”.

#### The General Social Care Council guidance for social workers

The General Social Care Council (GSCC) regulates the training and education of social workers. The GSCC is “responsible for ensuring that only those workers who are trained, fit and committed to high standards work in social care” can register.

When social workers register after completion of their course they are committed to the Codes of Practice set by the GSCC. The Codes of Practice were first set up in 2002 and meant that social care workers were regulated in a similar way to doctors, nurses and other health professionals.

More information about the codes of practice can be found on the website: [www.gsc.org.uk](http://www.gsc.org.uk).

## Access to Student Services

This section looks at the University's Enabling Services and offers some guidance on issues that teaching staff may need to take account of or services to which they can refer disabled students.

The Enabling Services are happy to offer awareness training on disabilities or specific learning difficulties or to discuss any of the issues on an individual basis with Faculties. Sessions can be provided on a range of disabilities/specific learning differences or individual health conditions as requested by faculties.

The University encourages students to express any concerns they may have regarding their disability or learning difference or the implementation of appropriate reasonable adjustments. It is recognised that the needs of an individual student may change during the course and that any reasonable adjustments would be updated accordingly.

All our Enabling Services teams are listed below; for further information, contact [enable@soton.ac.uk](mailto:enable@soton.ac.uk).

### *Learning Support*

Learning Support, which is part of Enabling Services, provides assistance to students with a wide range of disabilities, health conditions, mental health difficulties and specific learning difficulties. The assistance provided is tailored to meet individual needs and includes: note takers; library support; student buddies; scribes; readers and laboratory support.

Telephone: 27241

Email: [enable@soton.ac.uk](mailto:enable@soton.ac.uk)

### *Assistive Technology*

Assistive Technology (ATS), which is part of Enabling Services but based in the Hartley Library, provides IT facilities to help students with dyslexia or disabilities, or those who are particularly vulnerable to stress due to physical or mental health issues. ATS provides adaptable and individualised IT training; specialised software and hardware; focused software introductions; quiet and spacious study environment.

Telephone: 27620

Email: [ats@soton.ac.uk](mailto:ats@soton.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.ats.soton.ac.uk/>

### *Wessex Needs Assessment Centre (previously CELT)*

Wessex Needs Assessment Centre (WNAC) provides specialist assessments for disabled or dyslexic students who are eligible for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). The assessors work collaboratively with the student and the University and other external partners to consider the effects of the individual students' disabilities within the context of their main study activities. They recommend ICT equipment, training and study aids.

## Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

Many UK disabled and dyslexic students will be eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). All students registered with Education Support Services will be given information about their eligibility to apply for this. DSA can provide technological equipment; photocopying/book allowance; payment for tutorials; note-takers etc. This allowance has been managed by local authorities and other funding bodies such as the National Health Student Bursaries Unit. There will be a staged re-organisation from September 2009 and eventually the Students' Loan Company will organise the allowance centrally. From September 2009 all incoming English students should apply to Student Finance England. Students who are eligible to receive funding must complete an application form and provide evidence of their disability/specific learning difficulty. If eligible they will be asked to have an Assessment of Need to establish the appropriate support. Wessex Needs Assessment Centre usually carries out this assessment for University of Southampton students. Education Support Services can provide further details.

More information can be found from the [DirectGov website](#).

## Dyslexia Team

The Dyslexia team offers support for dyslexic students and students with other specific learning difficulties including:

- Initial screening assessments
- Full diagnostic assessments
- Individual academic study skills tutorials
- Special examination arrangements
- Coloured overlay tests
- Assistance with application for DSA

Telephone: 27241

Email: [enable@soton.ac.uk](mailto:enable@soton.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.soton.ac.uk/edusupport/dyslexia>

## Disability Team

The Disability Team provides advice and information to all students with disabilities, health conditions and mental health difficulties on a range of areas including:

- Applying for sources of funding such as Disability Living Allowance, Disabled Students' Allowances
- Arranging academic support such as additional exam arrangements
- Facilitating access to domestic and personal care

Telephone: 27241

Email: [enable@soton.ac.uk](mailto:enable@soton.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.soton.ac.uk/edusupport/disability>

## First Support

The First Support team is dedicated to being the first point of contact and supporting students during times of crisis. We work with students to identify what support is needed, appropriately refer to the correct service (liaising with those services where necessary) and assist students for very short periods until on-going support is in place.

The team works with students who may be experiencing the following types of difficulty:

- Mental health crisis
- Domestic abuse
- Relationship crisis
- Accommodation crisis
- Academic crisis (exam stress, missing deadlines)
- Substance abuse
- Death of family member/friend
- Serious illness
- Impact of someone else's difficulty on own health and /or study
- Violent sexual assault or attack
- Honour based violence
- Bullying/harassment
- Transitional/cultural crisis

Staff, students or family and friends can refer to the service by contacting via email or phone. Contact will be made directly with the student who is causing concern by the team when required. Students will be assessed for risk and then signposted and referred to appropriate internal and external services for on-going support.

Telephone: 27488

Email: [firstsupport@soton.ac.uk](mailto:firstsupport@soton.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/wellbeing>

## Counselling Team

The Counselling Team work with both staff and student clients to help balance study with emotional well-being. Students and Staff can access confidential counselling to address a wide range of personal, relationship or academic issues. A team of counsellors offers confidential individual counselling sessions. Group sessions are offered at different times throughout the year on topics such as depression, international students and managing stress.

Telephone: 23719

Email: [counser@soton.ac.uk](mailto:counser@soton.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www.soton.ac.uk/counselling>

## Additional Support

The University of Southampton's LexDis website has a series of guides for staff and students which to help make e-learning materials more accessible. The website provides a wealth of strategies that disabled students have devised to aid their learning.

In terms of accessibility to handouts and other resources, the University's LEXDIS project website provides guides to accessibility on [www.lexdis.ecs.soton.ac.uk/](http://www.lexdis.ecs.soton.ac.uk/)

## University of Southampton Inclusion Task Force

The University of Southampton Inclusion Task Force compiled their [first report in 2006](#), which drew the University's attention to the following principles, which they saw as underpinning inclusive learning and teaching:

**Proactivity:** planning for and anticipating how to address a range of learning needs.

**Adaptability:** being flexible, varying teaching and assessment practices, making reasonable adjustments, reviewing and modifying practices in the light of feedback and evaluation.

**Coherence:** approaches, methods, etc. adopted are consistent, well-organised and ensure equity in terms of how students are dealt with and the learning experience they are offered.

**Holism:** teaching practice that covers all aspects of curriculum and environment and involves the whole department / institution in a collaborative, seamless and joined up manner.

**Transparency:** clearly communicating (internally and externally) a consistent message regarding inclusion and being open in communicating and promoting that message.

The report provided an overview of good practice checklist for faculties to use when considering inclusion in teaching and learning strategies. The following issues were covered:

- Learning environment;
- Learning resources;
- Curriculum design and development;
- Learning and teaching methods and activities;
- Learning support;
- Staff attitude and awareness;
- Student awareness.

The task force provided a list of resources to help faculties consider inclusive practices.

A DVD was also produced which was intended for staff development. The DVD emphasises the University's obligation to anticipate students' needs and the importance of discussing these needs in a timely fashion. It gives examples of inclusive teaching practice and adaptations to teaching practices, which are of benefit to all students and mean that disabled students are not singled out. The DVD can also be viewed on the LATEU website.

## Chapter 6: Sources of advice and guidance

The following list of resources might be of help when deciding what is likely to be considered a reasonable adjustment:

***Able to Teach: Guidance for providers of initial teaching training on disability discrimination and fitness to teach*** (Updated 2007)

Examples of discrimination, reasonable adjustments, assessing fitness to teach, QTS, Case Studies

- [http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/a/able\\_to\\_teach.pdf](http://www.tda.gov.uk/upload/resources/pdf/a/able_to_teach.pdf)

***ADSHE (Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education)***

Guidelines on supporting dyslexic students and staff:

- Dyslexia Guidelines for the workplace;

Guidelines for good practice:

- Supporting learners on placement;
- Marking Guidelines;
- Reasonable Administrative Adjustments;
- Reasonable Adjustments in Academic Departments.

- <http://www.adshe.org.uk/>

***Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning***, chaired by Leisha Fullick, has produced a report, entitled “*From compliance to culture change*”, which illustrates how many disabled staff members are reluctant to disclose impairments because they fear discrimination.

- <http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/commissionfordisabledstaff/docs/Disabled-Staff-Commission-Interim-Report.pdf>

***Dyslexia and Inclusion: Assessment and Support in Higher Education*** Marion Farmer, Barbara Riddick and Christopher Sterling (2002)

***Equality Challenge Unit/Higher Education Academy***

This provides information and examples for academic staff for inclusive teaching practice:

- Legislative context;
- Competence standards;
- Admissions and inductions;
- Programme design and validation;

- Lectures;
- Practicals;
- Group Work;
- E-learning and distance learning;
- Work Placements;
- Assessments
- <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ECU>

### **General Medical Council**

*Gateways to the Professions: Advising Medical Schools, Encouraging disabled students.*  
This provides information about the legal background:

- Disability equality duty;
- Competence standards;
- Applying to medical schools;
- Disclosure;
- Reasonable adjustments;
- Teaching and learning
- [http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergraduate\\_policy/gateways\\_guidance/index.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/undergraduate_policy/gateways_guidance/index.asp)

**The Higher Education Academy Psychology Network** are leading a project to provide academic tutors and others involved in the provision of learning and teaching within higher education with a series of six e-bulletins covering key aspects of inclusive practice as well as listing key online resources that provide more in-depth information.

- <http://www.psychology.heacademy.ac.uk/networks/sig/>

**Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN)** has produced a series of useful material:

- Identifying and supervising a dissertation topic for a dyslexic student with medical difficulties, University of Nottingham
- Amending assessment for a Dyslexic Student, University of Nottingham
- Practice placements for Disabled Students, University of Central England
- <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/documents/makingreasonableadjustments.pdf>

### **PEdDS Best Practice Guide: disabled social work students and placements**

- Section 1: Guidance for Students
- Section 2: Guidance for Practice Assessors/Teachers
- Section 3: Academic Staff
- Section 4: Disability Support Staff
- <http://www.hull.ac.uk/pedds/documents/FINALBestPracticeGuide>

***Providing Learning Support for Students with Mental Health Difficulties Undertaking Fieldwork and Related Activities*** (Cheltenham: Geography Discipline Network)

- <http://www.chelt.ac.uk/gdn/disabil/mental/>

***Quality Assurance Agency: Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in Higher Education***

Section 3: Students with disabilities October 1999

***Scottish Higher Education Council, University of Strathclyde*** has published a series of guides for academic staff:

- Creating accessible e-learning resources for disabled students
- Creating accessible exams and assessments for disabled students
- Creating accessible lectures for disabled students
- Creating accessible placements for disabled students
- Creating accessible seminars and tutorials for disabled students
- Creating accessible curriculum for disabled students
- <http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk>

***Staff-Student Partnership for Assessment Change and Evaluation (SPACE) Inclusive Assessment in Higher Education: A Resource for Change***

- Towards Inclusive Learning In Higher Education: Developing curricula for disabled students Edited by Mike Adams and Sally Brown (2006) Routledge
- The Viva Voce Handbook, Symonds, H (2007) University of the Arts, London

***University of Southampton resources***

Dyslexia Services and the School of Health Sciences - Supporting dyslexic students on practice placements

- [http://www.soton.ac.uk/edusupport/ldc/docs/Dyslexia\\_lo.pdf](http://www.soton.ac.uk/edusupport/ldc/docs/Dyslexia_lo.pdf)

***Revision History***

1. Added to Quality Handbook 15 September 2009
2. Added page numbers and reformatted some text 27 October 2009
3. Reformatted and updated for new University structure 3 October 2011