

Accessible Placements and Disabled Students Policy

Purpose and Context

This policy and attached appendices provide the University framework to ensure equality of opportunity for disabled students when preparing, undertaking and providing any feedback about a placement.

Provision of placements is an integral part of the work of the University of Huddersfield in supporting students to achieve positive outcomes when transitioning onwards into post graduate work or further study.

Principles and Legal Context

Disabled students are entitled to equality of opportunity in terms of access to placement and work experience and are valued as students with a unique set of skills, knowledge, and aspirations.

Work-based learning can be key for some disabled students in terms of professional development, real-world experience, and demonstration of skills to future employers.

The Equality Act 2010 requires universities not to disadvantage or discriminate against a disabled student whilst identifying, securing, and accessing a placement. The Act places responsibilities on the placement provider to support a disabled student during placement, to make reasonable adjustments where required and not to discriminate against them in any part of the placement process. The Act also calls for individuals and organisations to be pro-active in anticipating the requirements of disabled students.

There is therefore an overlap in the responsibilities of the University and the placement provider in terms of ensuring support throughout the process.

Scope

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'placements' includes paid or unpaid placements, placements of any length, including other work-related opportunities which fall within course parameters or are credit bearing, for example work-based projects, work shadowing or an enterprise placement.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The University will endeavour to proactively anticipate the requirements of disabled students before, during and after placement. The University will provide information to applicants about course requirements relating to work-based learning.
- 1.2 The University will work alongside disabled students to seek and maintain accessible placements, make reasonable adjustments, and remove barriers as far as possible to ensure equality of access and opportunity. (For further information about support and reasonable adjustments please see Appendix 1. For guidelines on carrying out a pre-placement assessment of the student's requirements, please see Appendix 2.)

2.0 Sharing disability information

- 2.1 The University endeavours to offer students multiple opportunities to share information about a disability. Students can approach any member of staff at any time before or during their course and they are encouraged to see an advisor in Disability Services. Once a student has linked with Disability Services, they are asked to consent to information about their disability being held by the University and disseminated to University staff for the purposes of ensuring the provision of support. If a student has shared information about a disability with Disability Services, this information is contained in a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) and made available to staff in the academic school.
- 2.2 The University does not share disability-related information with the placement provider; however, the student is strongly encouraged to do so, in order that the appropriate support or adjustments can be put in place. This is particularly important when the impact of a disability may affect a student's ability to carry out the tasks and responsibilities of a placement and where there is a Public, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirement to share disability-related information. (See Appendix 3 – Reasons for and against disclosure.) Students should be made fully aware of the implications and potential consequences if a disability is not disclosed in these circumstances.
- 2.3 On rare occasions, a student may not agree to the disclosure of a disability to a placement provider but the risk assessment the University has been able to do indicates that there is an unacceptable level of risk to the health, safety and/or wellbeing of the disabled student/public/work colleagues. The risk assessment may also take into consideration any requirements stipulated by employers or PSRB placement providers. For example, a student on an Operating Department Practice course who has a significant visual impairment, which after exploring a range of adjustments, means they are unable to identify and differentiate between surgical tools. In circumstances such as these, the following procedures will be carried out:

- 2.3.1 A meeting will be offered to the student to explain the reasons behind the need to share information with a placement provider. Where relevant, this discussion should include information about any requirements relating to PSRBs. The student is allowed to bring a friend or supporter. A representative from Disability Services could also be present.
 - 2.3.2 If the student does not consent to sharing disability information, then the option of partial or limited disclosure will be discussed to explore whether this will minimise the risk. (This could include the communication of the adjustment to the placement provider whilst the details of the disability are kept within the University.)
 - 2.3.3 If the student remains unwilling to share disability information, the University will not place the student at the work placement. The decision not to place the student, the reasons why and any implications for the student's award will be reiterated in a letter to the student. Any alternatives available to the student will also be detailed in the letter. A copy of this letter will be sent to the Dean and the student is advised to contact the Dean if they are unhappy with the decision.
- 2.4 If the placement is not successful, the University will discuss the options with the student – including information about potential provision to find an alternative placement.
- 2.5 The University will offer the student the opportunity to evaluate their placement and will take appropriate action on the feedback.

3.0 Recommendations and reasonable adjustments for placement

- 3.1 Non-specific recommendations for placement support are made in the PLSP initially and recommend that a student requests additional support or adjustments for placement where required. Depending on the support required and the impact of a disability, this may range from guidance to complete a CV or covering letter to a multi-disciplinary assessment or review of the support with a student. Where necessary, the PLSP can be updated to reflect any support or adjustments agreed for placement. (For further information about support and reasonable adjustments please see Appendix 1.) The University ensures that the PLSP is available to any member of staff working alongside a student when offering support or adjustments relating to a placement.
- 3.2 The University will ensure that any reasonable adjustments do not compromise the learning outcomes or competence requirements of a placement. A range of reasonable adjustments will be explored in each individual situation including alternative ways in which students can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes. Reasonable adjustments will consider: the impact of the student's disability; health, safety

and wellbeing of the student and others; funding available; the practicalities of taking a particular step; the effect on others.

- 3.3 With regard to professional and vocational courses where there are specific accreditation requirements, for example PSRB requirements, adjustments will not be made that might prevent a disabled student gaining the work-place component accreditation. The University will work with the external/professional bodies in order to ensure that requirements are applied in an equitable way that allow for reasonable adjustments to be made.

4.0 Academic and professional standards and placement competencies

- 4.1 Academic and professional standards will be maintained for disabled and non-disabled students alike. The professional competencies of disabled applicants or students will not be pre-judged, nor will they be expected to meet competence standards at the start of the course that other students are expected to meet during or at the end of their studies.
- 4.2 Where an academic standard or learning outcome may have an adverse impact on a disabled applicant or student, the University will offer full justification and explanation for this.
- 4.3 The University will provide disabled students with a named contact and will maintain a level of communication with them throughout their placement. The University will inform the student about what action to take if difficulties arise during the placement.

Appendix 1

Examples of Support or Reasonable Adjustments during a placement

The following are examples of areas where support can be offered or reasonable adjustments can be made by the University, placement providers and the student. It is not intended that this is an exhaustive list and adjustments are made according to individual requirements. It should also be noted that there may be some limitations on the provision of adjustments for some professional courses.

Any costs involved may be funded through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), Access to Work or borne directly by the University of Huddersfield or the placement provider.

1. Additional time to prepare for the placement to allow for reasonable adjustments to be explored, recommended and implemented.
2. Pre-placement support – to examine the learning outcomes in order that the student has a full understanding; to look at work expectations on the part of the student and the placement provider; to examine what technical, human, or other support the student may require.
3. Risk assessment or health, safety, and wellbeing assessment - what risks may exist to the student and/or others' health & safety, what measures exist to reduce the risk and what further measures can be introduced? The University's general risk assessment form, which is available on the [Health and Safety web site](#) may be a useful tool.
4. Multi-disciplinary assessment or review – a meeting involving the student and other relevant staff or organisations (for example: Disability Services, academic staff, placement unit staff, a representative from the placement organisation) to discuss what support is required on placement. (See Appendix 2.)
5. Signposting to Careers and Employability for guidance on an application form, CV, application letters – support to write or complete relevant documentation.
6. Interview support – notifying the relevant organisation of requirements for example wheelchair access; additional time for the interview; support worker provision etc.
7. Location of the placement – provision of a placement close to the student's home or accommodation to reduce travel times.

8. Lines of communication – clear guidelines regarding communication between the student, University, and placement provider; agreement on how to manage any information shared about a disability.
9. Nominated staff who the students can approach with specific requests/information whilst on placement should the student have any questions, queries, or concerns.
10. Method of communication – to ensure the placement provider is aware of the student’s preferred method of communication; to provide clarity about how to convey instructions, for example is it necessary to provide very clear guidelines for a task for a student with processing difficulties or a literal understanding of instructions.
11. Accessible environment - physical access to premises; evacuation procedures; ergonomic equipment; transport to and from the placement; availability of health facilities; provision for a guide dog etc.?
12. Provision of specialist equipment – for example specialist software, lightweight laptop, recording software, read-aloud or speech to text software, ergonomic keyboard or mouse, ergonomic seating. Exploration of what software the student is expected to use of placement and whether there are any issues with the use of assistive technology alongside this.
13. Material in alternative formats – for example large print; recorded material; electronic material; Braille; coloured paper; specified font etc.
14. Working hours and arrangements – flexible length of placement; adaptations to start and finish times or the number of days per week the student is expected to work; sickness and emergency arrangements etc.
15. Workload – adjustment to the level of reading/writing during the placement; adjustments to work deadlines; adjustment to the physical demands made of the student etc.
16. Daily arrangements or routine – some students may require orientation about public transport, information about the protocol for breaks and lunch breaks, food outlets near to placement, etc.
17. Support Worker arrangements – for example BSL interpreter; on-going dyslexia tuition; personal support.

Appendix 2

Sample form to review the recommendations for support before and during placement for disabled students:

Name of student:

Name of people involved in the review:

Date:

	What support is required?	What support currently exists? (Support in the department, Careers or Disability Services for example)	Additional support to be put in place?
Application			
Interview			
Risk Assessment if required (the University's <u>risk assessment form</u> may be useful)			
Location of the placement and			

transport arrangements			
Communication requirements and staff to support the student on placement			
Work environment and accessibility			
Specialist equipment or software			
Working hours and workload			
Support worker requirements			
Other			

Appendix 3

Reasons for & against disclosure of a disability to a placement provider

Information and guidance to support students and staff when exploring issues around sharing disability-related information with placement providers:

Reasons for disclosure

- Disclosure enables reasonable adjustments to be made and support to be put in place.
- The student is in a better position to demonstrate their competencies and meet the placement requirements.
- Disclosure encourages a clearer understanding of the student's disability and their requirements.
- It may help to alleviate any difficulties once the placement has started.
- It encourages greater communication between the student, University and placement provider.
- Stress and anxiety before and during a placement are likely to be reduced.
- It enables public, statutory and regulatory body requirements to be met.
- Staff currently working for the placement provider will develop an increased awareness of the requirements of disabled people and adjustments may make the placement environment more inclusive.
- The University is willing to discuss partial or limited disclosure as not all information about a student's disability is relevant to the placement provider: potentially only certain members of staff need to be aware.

Reasons against disclosure

- The student may have already developed sufficient strategies to support themselves during placement.
- The student may not feel that they require any reasonable adjustments as their disability does not have a significant impact.
- The student may have anxieties about any stigma, discrimination or labelling that may occur as a result of disclosure.
- If placements are limited, students may feel employers will offer places to non-disabled students before disabled students.
- The student may wish for their disability to remain confidential for personal reasons – especially if this means discussing matters of personal care etc.

Sources of further support

The Image Project – improving employability for autistic graduates.

Teachability Project - Creating accessible placements, study abroad and field trips for disabled students.

Accessible high quality placements and work based learning for disabled students -

Guidance for staff in managing work placements for all students, University of Worcester

Accessible placements – University of Edinburgh

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