

# **Guidelines**

## **Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Students in Work Placement**

### **Introduction**

These guidelines are for academic, professional and support staff at the University and in placement settings who have responsibility for arranging and enabling students to complete essential practice based elements of their course.

They describe a procedure that has been developed by the University of Bradford Disability Service in partnership with colleagues from three University Faculties, a range clinical staff, practice based educators and disabled students.

The procedure (see RA Process Map) aims to provide a clear framework within which the University can make sure that it meets both its legal obligations and its commitment to providing a high quality learning experience for all. Where placements form an integral part of a programme or extra-curricular activities is essential to ensure that disabled students have an equitable experience and are not disadvantaged by unnecessary barriers.

The procedure aims to make sure that placement providers have all the information that they need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students on placement so that students are able to meet their learning outcomes/essential criteria, practice effectively and safely and develop their full potential. Effective communication and information sharing is central to this procedure and its success relies on:

- Encouraging and enabling students to feel confident about sharing information about their impairment;
- Effective identification and assessment of disabled student's needs;
- Understanding of the need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and a commitment to implementing them;
- Maintenance of academic and professional standards;
- Promoting practices that ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, staff and members of the public.

The procedure includes a clear and consistent referral process using the Placement Support Agreement (PSA) form. The PSA is a document that is completed by the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) with the student prior to placements.

The PSA should be sent in advance or in some circumstances taken by the student into the practice/work based setting, to advise mentors and appropriate others of adjustments that are required.

## **The University's duty to disabled students**

By law the University has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to practices, procedures and the physical environment to ensure that disabled students do not encounter unnecessary barriers or be disadvantaged compared to non-disabled students. This applies to all aspects of learning and teaching including placements.

## **Definitions**

The Equality Act (2010) states that a person is disabled if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment,
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial,
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions),
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping or learning.

There are additional provisions relating to people with progressive conditions; people with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis are protected by the Act from the point of diagnosis.

Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia) are also included under the definition of disability.

“Dyslexia is a learning difference, a combination of strengths and weaknesses which affects the learning process in reading, spelling, writing and sometimes numeracy. Dyslexic learners may also have accompanying weaknesses in short term memory, sequencing and the speed at which they process information” (Rose 2009).

## **Who decides if a student is disabled?**

Any student who identifies themselves as disabled, or who has a condition, health or mental health related issue can contact the Disability Service to request support. In order to be eligible for reasonable adjustments and support the student is required to provide 'formal' evidence relating to their condition, for example a letter or report from a medical or psychological practitioner.

Once this evidence is received it is reviewed by a Disability Adviser who will determine whether it conforms to explicit criteria, based on the legal definition.

If a student is judged to be disabled according to these criteria they are offered an assessment of their needs and recommendations for reasonable adjustments.

## The Procedure

1. A disabled Students registers with the Disability Service and provides evidence that they are 'disabled'. This might be a letter from a GP, a report from an Educational Psychologist or other specialist.
2. A Disability Adviser discusses the impact of the student's impairment on their day to day life in the context of the University and the learning environment. They assess the student's needs and make recommendations for adjustments using a reporting tool on Evision (which links to SAINT). A document called a Learner Support Profile (LSP) is created and is saved on the individual student's Evision account. Once this is approved by the student, a notification is sent to a named LSP contact in the student's Faculty. LSP contacts are asked to notify all relevant staff including the student's Personal Academic Tutor (PAT).
3. If a student has a placement as part of their course the Disability Adviser will discuss the possible impact of their impairment in a clinical or placement setting. The Disability Adviser will talk to the student about the importance of sharing relevant information about their impairment with placement providers if they need or are likely to need reasonable adjustments. At this stage the student gives verbal permission for disability related information to be shared with the placement provider and this is recorded on their LSP.
4. If a student has a placement as part of their course LSP contacts are also asked to notify the staff in the Faculty/Programme Area with responsibility for organising placement activity, so that they are also aware of the need to make reasonable adjustments.
5. It is the PAT's responsibility to contact the student to discuss any adjustments that they might need in a placement setting. However, students are also advised to contact their PAT to follow this up. If it is felt to be necessary (depending on the possible impact of the student's impairment), this discussion should include other relevant staff, including specialist staff from the Disability Service and staff in the placement setting.
6. Using the information contained in the student's LSP as a starting point, and in discussion with the student (and other relevant staff), the Personal Academic Tutor should complete a Placement Support Agreement (PSA) form. The PSA should be signed by the student and the PAT and sent in advance to the relevant named contact in the placement setting. A copy of the completed agreement should also be sent to the student's Disability Adviser for information.
7. On the occasion, where a student requests confidentiality and does not verbally agree to sharing information with a placement provider, the Disability Adviser will discuss the implications of this, and explain clearly that the student cannot expect adjustments in

the placement setting. They are then asked to complete a 'Request not to share Disability Related Information' form. The Disability Adviser will explain to the student that they will need to discuss their request not to share with their PAT. The Disability Adviser will then tick the relevant box on Evision and the PAT (Faculty) will be alerted via the LSP.

8. Where it is considered that 'not sharing information' will not have any adverse impact or risk for the student, patients, clients or colleagues, the student should sign a 'Request not to share Disability Related Information' form. A note should be made on the student's file and no further action should be taken.
9. In exceptional circumstances where it is felt that after consideration of all the risks, that not sharing information might put either the student or patient/client/colleague at risk the PAT should refer/discuss this with their Head of Programme Area. It is the responsibility of the Head of the Programme Area to liaise with the student and relevant support services such as the Disability Service and make a final decision about the student's options.
10. When the student is on placement, the PSA form should be used to comment on and record relevant information about the effectiveness of the reasonable adjustments and feed this back to the University, through the student's Faculty/Programme area. If any amendments or changes to the adjustments are necessary, this information should be passed back to the student's Disability Adviser so that they can amend and update the student's LSP, which will be sent to the Faculty/Programme Area to provide information for the development of any future PSAs.