

**This policy and the attached appendices provide the University code of practice for the provision of accessible placements for disabled students.**



A placement is a negotiated, planned and agreed period of work-based learning which can be part or whole of a programme of study. There is a designation of specific or general learning outcomes, often integral to the course. A student is expected to engage with the work place prior to and during the work placement. The assessment is often on-going and may involve reflective practice/production of a portfolio.

Provision of placements is an important part of the work of the University of Huddersfield and the institution has strong relationships with an array of placement providers. These relationships vary due to the terms of employment and nature of the placement. The policy therefore provides guidelines rather than specific instructions on providing an accessible placement.

It is the practice of the University of Huddersfield to work alongside disabled students to meet their placement requirements.

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## Principles

- Disabled students, wherever appropriate, should have the same opportunities as non-disabled students to undertake work-based learning.
- Vocational learning can be key for some disabled students in terms of personal development and employability.
- Serious efforts to ensure accessible placements demonstrates the value the University of Huddersfield places on off-campus learning.
- Some disabled students may require more support than non-disabled students in planning, securing, negotiating and maintaining a work placement. Priority can be given to disabled students in order to meet their requirements.

## The Legal Context

### The Equality Act 2010

The Act requires Universities not to discriminate against or victimise a student:

- in the way we provide education for the student
- in the way we give the student access to a benefit, facility or service
- by not providing education for that student
- by not affording the student access to any benefit, facility or service
- by excluding the student
- by subjecting them to any other detriment.



There are also duties on placement providers by the Act not to discriminate against disabled students whilst on placement and to make reasonable adjustments to ensure the placement is accessible to disabled students.

There is therefore an overlap in the responsibilities of the University and the placement provider in terms of making reasonable adjustments. The University of Huddersfield is ultimately responsible for supporting the student in making the placement provider aware of their requirements, the need to make reasonable adjustments and for ensuring, as far as possible, that disabled students are not disadvantaged before, during or after a placement.

## Quality Assurance Code

Assuring and enhancing academic quality

Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement (from January 2014) states:

‘During their period of study, the learning environment for students is likely to change, and higher education providers manage this to enable students to develop and progress. Higher education providers put in place accessible and clearly communicated opportunities to enable students to discuss specific issues about their learning objectives and academic progression, and make appropriate choices. The systems which enable students' academic progression are implemented through a partnership between students and staff in both professional services and academic departments, with information and organisational facilities and procedures shared appropriately. These systems are supported by clear communication processes in order to harness relevant expertise, so staff know how and when to refer students to others, and to whom. Higher education providers pay particular attention to how these systems operate when students move into another learning environment, such as an employment based placement or period of study abroad.’

‘Higher education providers work with others to enable student development and achievement. The organisations involved may include other education providers and employers offering work-based learning or placement opportunities. Where higher education providers work with others to offer learning opportunities, the organisation and resourcing of provision to enable student development and learning are agreed. [...] Those with whom higher education providers work are informed sufficiently to understand the needs and expectations of students, either as a group or individually. Information is communicated with due regard to considerations of confidentiality, consent and timeliness.’

## Policy

1. The University will endeavour to proactively anticipate the requirements of disabled students before, during and after work-based learning. The University will endeavour to provide information to applicants about course requirements relating to work-based learning.
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 reasonable adjustments please see Appendix 1 and for guidelines on carrying out a pre-placement assessment of the student's requirements, please see Appendix 2)
3. The University strongly encourages disabled students to disclose their disability and/or their requirements to placement providers in order that appropriate support can be put in place. (See Appendix 3 – Reasons for and against disclosure.)
4. If a student has disclosed a disability to Disability Services, this information is shared with the academic school who in turn should make the relevant placement units or placement tutors aware of the names of the disabled students.
5. A student's disability will not be disclosed to a placement provider without the student's permission. If a student does not give their permission to share this information, this will be documented and circulated to the relevant internal Schools/Services (e.g. Disability Coordinator and Disability Services).
6. If a student does not agree to the disclosure of a disability 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 well being of the disabled student/public/work colleagues, the following procedures will be carried out:
  - a) A meeting will be offered to the student to explain the reasons behind the need for disclosure. The student is allowed to bring a friend or supporter. A representative from Disability Services could also be present.
  - b) If the student will not consent to disclosure at this meeting, 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.)
  - c) If the student remains unwilling to disclose, the University will not place the student at the work placement. The decision not to place the student, the reasons why and the 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.
7. The University will ensure that any reasonable adjustments made 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 take into account: the impact of the student's disability; health, safety and well being of the student and others; funding available; the practicalities of taking a particular step; the effect on others.

## Policy continued...

8. With regard to professional and vocational courses where there are specific accreditation requirements, adjustments will not be made that might prevent a disabled student gaining the work place component accreditation. The University will endeavour to 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. The University will provide the student with information about the complaints procedure.
13. 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.

## Appendix 1: Examples of Reasonable Adjustments during a placement

Under the Equality Act Oct 2010, a duty is placed on the institution to make reasonable adjustments when a disabled person would be placed at a substantial disadvantage.

The following are examples of areas where reasonable adjustments can be made by the University, placement providers and the student. It is not intended that this is an exhaustive list. Any costs involved may be funded through the Disabled Students' Allowance, Access to Work or borne directly by the University of Huddersfield or the placement provider.

1. Pre-placement support – to examine in detail 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/other support the student may require.
2. Risk assessment or health, safety and well-being 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?
3. Application form/CV/application letters – support to write or complete relevant documentation.
4. Interview – notifying the relevant organisation of requirements; additional time for the interview; support worker provision etc.
5. Lines of communication – clear guidelines regarding communication between the student, University and placement provider; agreement on how to handle disability disclosure information; who to approach with specific requests/information etc.
6. 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.?
7. Provision of specialist equipment – e.g. specialist software, lightweight laptop, digital recorder, wrist rests, adapted keyboard/mouse etc.
8. Material in alternative formats – e.g. large print; recorded material; electronic material; Braille; coloured paper; specified font etc.
9. Preferred method of communication – to ensure the placement provider is aware of the student's preferred method of communication, especially for complex instructions.
10. Working hours/arrangements – flexible length of placement; adaptations to start and finish times/number of days per week the student is expected to work; sickness/emergency arrangements etc.
11. Daily arrangements/routine – some students may require orientation about public transport, food outlets near to placement etc.
12. Support Worker arrangements – BSL interpreter; on-going dyslexia tuition; personal support etc.
13. Work load – adjustment to the level of reading/writing during the placement; adjustments to work deadlines; adjustment to the physical demands made of the student etc.

## Appendix 2—Disability support pro-forma — Pre-placement assessment of the student’s requirements.

It is intended that this assessment form can be completed in 2 sections where appropriate to the student’s requirements:

Section A—to be completed before the placement application stage

Section B—to be completed once the placement is secured

Name of student:

Impact of student’s disability:

Name of those people involved in the assessment:  
 Section A: \_\_\_\_\_ Section B: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Section A assessment:

	What support is required?	What support currently exists?	Any additional support to be put in place?
Application stage – producing CV, writing application letter etc.			
Interview Stage – longer time for interview, interview panel made aware, practice interview etc.			

Please specify any agreements on how the information regarding the student’s disability will be disclosed during the placement (i.e. which staff at the placement provider will be informed; what information will be passed on etc.):

## Appendix 2—Disability support pro-forma — Pre-placement assessment of the student’s requirements continued...

Date of Section B assessment:

Placement Provider details (including named contact):

Is it a paid placement? – yes/no (delete as appropriate)

Start & finish dates of placement:

	What support is required?	What support currently exists? (Will this continue during the placement?)	Any additional support to be put in place?
Work environment & accessibility			
Transport arrangements			
Specialist equipment/ software			
Support Worker requirements			
Working hours/ arrangements			
Format of material: printed/electronic			
Workload			
Other			

## Appendix 3: Reasons for & against disclosure of a disability to a placement provider

The University endeavours to offer students multiple opportunities to disclose a disability. Students can approach any member of staff at any time before or during their course to disclose a disability. They are encouraged to see an advisor in Disability Services. Once a student has linked with an advisor, they will be asked to consent to information being held about them and their disability by the University, and disseminated to appropriate individuals and organisations. They will receive an explanation of the nature of the information held about a student and the parties that will be given information about a student's disability.

### 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 course requirements.
- Disclosure encourages a clearer understanding of the student's disability and their requirements.
- It encourages greater communication between the student, University and placement provider.
- Stress and anxiety before and during a placement are likely to be reduced.
- Staff currently working for the placement provider will develop an increased awareness of the requirements of disabled people and may benefit from adjustments made for the student.
- 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 them whilst on 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.
- The student may worry that their colleagues will treat them differently or believe that they are not skilled enough for the post.

## Sources of further support

University of Huddersfield Preparation for Practice Assessment Tool <http://ppa.hud.ac.uk/>

The Teachability Project at the University of Strathclyde. See '*Creating accessible placements, study abroad and field trips for disabled students*'. [http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter\\_5/introduction5.html](http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter_5/introduction5.html)

*Providing work placements for disabled students: A good practice guide for further and higher education institutions*. Available at: [www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/placements/](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/placements/)

Business Disability Forum <http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/>

*Accessible high quality placements and work based learning for all students—Guidance for staff in managing work placements for disabled students*. University of Worcester. Available at: [www.worc.ac.uk/edu/documents/Accessible\\_high\\_quality\\_placements\\_and\\_wbl\\_brochure\\_final\\_Sept\\_2011.pdf](http://www.worc.ac.uk/edu/documents/Accessible_high_quality_placements_and_wbl_brochure_final_Sept_2011.pdf)