AdvanceHE

Go Higher West Yorkshire: Disabled learners' HE transitions and student experiences

Anne Rowan

October 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the literature review

Advance HE composed a literature review to explore and better understand the needs, experiences and concerns of disabled learners currently studying at a Higher Education Provider (HEP) institutions in the UK, and the barriers that have formed part of their experiences as a disabled student. The client, Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) sought to understand the varied experiences of learners with a range of disabilities and to focus primarily on social and cognitive aspects.

The literature review will aim to tackle two key questions:

1. What are the barriers, challenges and concerns faced by disabled learners in relation to their progression to HE?
2. In what ways can support/accessibility mechanisms ease the preparation for and transition into HE?

The literature review will also include a review of good practice initiatives currently in place in higher education providers, to help to create an evidence base of "What Works?' in supporting Disabled Students in HE.

1.2 Methodology

The search for existing literature was conducted using two main databases (EBSCO and Scopus), as well as targeting grey literature to find current examples of 'what works' in supporting disabled students. The latter included a search of university websites, as well as blogposts related to teaching and learning. Advance HE conducted a rapid review of the following materials and data to help establish a baseline of existing knowledge and understanding about the experiences of disabled students. This also includes an investigation of current contextual barriers (i.e. Covid-19) and historical discrimination that might have contributed to the challenges faced:

- Disabled Student Commission (DSC) reports
- Student Academic Experience Survey results (as conducted by Advance HE in partnership with the Higher Education Policy Institute) for disabled students
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) disability data and commentary analysis (especially relevant to the importance of defining disability as broadly as practicable).

Advanced Boolean search terms related to: (i) Disability (ii) transition (iii) inclusion; and (iv) reading lists, were used to find publications that were relevant to the overarching theme of disabled student transition. As the literature review is aimed at discussing our current knowledge of what works, documents published in the last five to ten years were prioritised.

2. THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 Legal Landscape

Disability in Higher Education (HE)

Institutions in the UK have a legal obligation to support and provide appropriate services for these students who identify as having a disability, including mental health conditions. National legislation in the form of the Equality Act (2010) defines 'Disability' as, "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." The Equality Act 2010 places a 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 an institution can treat a disabled person favourably compared to a non-disabled person, and this would not amount to direct discrimination of a non-disabled person.

The UK Special Education Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) (2001) states that students with disabilities should not be discriminated against or substantially disadvantaged by higher education providers. The act states, it "is unlawful for the body responsible for an educational institution to discriminate against a disabled person:"

- in the arrangements it makes for determining admissions to the institution;
- in the terms on which it offers to admit them to the institution; or
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for admission to the institution.

The Act also highlights that it is unlawful for an educational institution to discriminate against a disabled student in the student services it provides or offers to provide.

Therefore, UK higher education providers need to manage the adjustments required for such students effectively. In particular, higher education institutions need to ensure that such adjustments are implemented in a timely and co-ordinated manner when students arrive, and where possible anticipate such adjustments before the student actually starts their course of study (Student Finance England, 2022). However, SENDA (2021) does not give a clear indication of what is a reasonable adjustment

is, but that will relate to the academic standards, costs, practicalities, health and safety and relevant interests of others. The order also states that an institution cannot be held "to have unlawfully discriminated if it did not know and could not reasonably have known that a student is disabled" (SENDA, 2001). Researchers have criticised this as being too vague and open to interpretation, therefore leaving room for claims of justifiable discrimination (Simpson et al, 2009).

2.2   Accessing Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)

According to [Student Finance England (2017/18) DSA Guidance](#) "Funding through DSAs should be the top of an apex of support, underpinned by an inclusive environment, and individual reasonable adjustments where required." Domestic students who are resident in the UK and have a disability will be eligible to apply for government funding known as Disabled Student Allowance (DSA). On completion of their DSA1 form and attaching supplementary medical evidence or an Educational Psychologist's report, this is then sent to Student Finance England for approval of the application. Once this is approved, students will then attend a local assessment centre to undertake a needs assessment to discuss their individual needs and determine the nature of support required to aid their disability. After assessment, a copy of these support requirements is compiled in a report and is sent to Student Finance England for review and approval of accommodations. Disability services is also provided with a copy of this report. Once the final accommodations have been granted, the student is, in most cases, automatically organised a one-to-one appointment with a disability advisor at the institution to discuss their support needs. University staff who work in Disability services will be familiar with the DSA application processes and procedures. International students with disabilities cannot avail of DSA government funding as they are not resident in the UK and cannot access government funding. A number of HEIs have put in place Student Support funds, which international disabled students can avail of to ensure they have financial support for their disability. Some examples of this are illustrated below:

Institution	Funding name	Support offered
University College London (UCL)	Disability-related study support for international students	· Specialist software, such as a assistive technologies can be provided to you to support with your teaching and learning · Specialist study skills tutoring for students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD) such as dyslexia or dyspraxia · A note-taker or other non-medical helper for course-related needs (up to a maximum hourly rate and

		hours assessed as reasonable by Student Support and Wellbeing) · Other study related costs
The University of Edinburgh	Disabled Students Support Fund (DSSF)	Extra costs or expenses that you may incur while studying and which are a direct result of your disability.
University of Cambridge	International Disabled Students' Fund (IDS Fund)	Academic related disability support may include: · An independent Needs Assessment · Specialist equipment you need for studying, for example computer software or a digital voice recorder · Non-medical help, such as a note-taker or Specialist 1:1 study skill · Extra travel costs you have to pay because of your disability

3. Transitional challenges facing disabled students in Higher Education (HE)

3.1 The language of disability

Models of Disability: The Medical and Social Model

Disability can be understood from various perspectives; however, it can be broadly defined from two main standpoints: the medical model and social model. The medical model is based on bodily impairment and requires treatment in order to be 'cured' (Singh, 2014). Scholars such as Haynes and Hannold (2007) have critiqued the medical model of disability stating that the medicalisation of disability leads to social, economic and political inequalities because medicalisation leads to stigmatisation. On the other hand, the social model suggests that disability is shaped by society by the restriction of impaired individuals accessing resources (Singh, 2014). This relates to the physical environment, for example ramps for wheelchair users, as well as the need to change attitudes to ensure that disabled people are not discriminated against (EFDS, 2017). In the social model the problem lies in society and the 'taken for granted' practices which act to exclude people with disabilities from full participation. Rather than 'fix' the individual so they can participate in society like everyone else, the social model seeks to 'fix' society so that the environment is as inclusive as possible.

Defining disability

The language we use is very important, with Haller et al. (2006, p.61) cautioning that "language has always had power to define cultural groups". Disabled people are progressively rejecting the imposed identity of 'other' (Silvers, 2002) with many neurodiverse people arguing that their differences are not an impairment but part of 'normal' human diversity.

UK social model theorists argue that the expression 'people with disabilities' is directly linked to the philosophy underlying the medical model. Therefore, the term 'disabled people' is preferred as it better reflects the societal oppression that those with impairments are faced with every day. Referring to 'disabled people' is termed 'identity first' language (Autistic Self Advocacy Network, 2022) in which the identity is placed before the person, acknowledging that it is a key part of someone's experience. It does not imply that their disability is their complete identity, but rather, that it is entwined within their identity.

The term 'Special Educational Need' (SEN) – widely used in Primary/Post Primary education in the UK - encompasses a wide range of difficulties, including visual, hearing, intellectual, emotional and gifted, that may hamper a student's achievement (Stakes and Hornby, 2000). Booth et al. (2000) recommend replacing the term SEN with 'barriers to learning and participation' a more general term

taking account of race, social class and gender issues, which are not included in the current definition of SEN. Mittler (2000) also contests the term SEN, contending that "special" is an archaic and prejudicial word. Furthermore, Mittler (2000) recognises that the term SEN endures because finding an adequate replacement is difficult, especially because it is already embodied in Equality legislation.

3.2 Differences in disability terminology between school and Higher Education (HE)

Language also varies across contexts in the UK. In HE, we refer to 'disabled students'; in schools, disabled children are described as having 'special educational needs and disabilities' (SEND) and colleges vary their use between the two terms. The idea that 'special needs' is a contested term (Valentine 2002), can come as quite a surprise to students who have come from the schools' sector. One example from a Russell Group university of this language difference was proposed by Martin (2008) who provided an example of an undergraduate with five A levels (grade A) commenting: 'I used to be a special needs child' in the context of a DSA needs assessment. During the assessment he further demonstrated low self-esteem and reported not having been particularly encouraged towards university. Some authors including Barnes (2008) and Richards (2008) consider that 'othering' language and attitudes can precipitate social exclusion and Martin's (2008) example illustrates the potential for a negatively interpreted label to impact on self-perception, as well as academic expectation.

Disabled students may face multiple barriers and challenges, not only in transitioning to Higher Education, but also during the duration of the student lifecycle. Students may find that their difficulties with learning increase at times of transition and change because they have been removed from a familiar and relatively stable learning setting (Special Educational Needs Magazine, 2022). The below information outlines the key challenges and obstacles facing disabled students, both during transition and during their academic studies:

3.3 Higher levels of anxiety and financial concerns

Disabled students noted higher levels of anxiety both during transition and throughout the duration of their studies. As shown in the graph below, the Student Academic Experience Survey (2022) found clear differences in the experience of disabled students in comparison to their non-disabled peers, particularly in terms of high anxiety levels, low perception of value and lower likelihood to make the same choice of course/institution in the future.

Key measures – disabled students
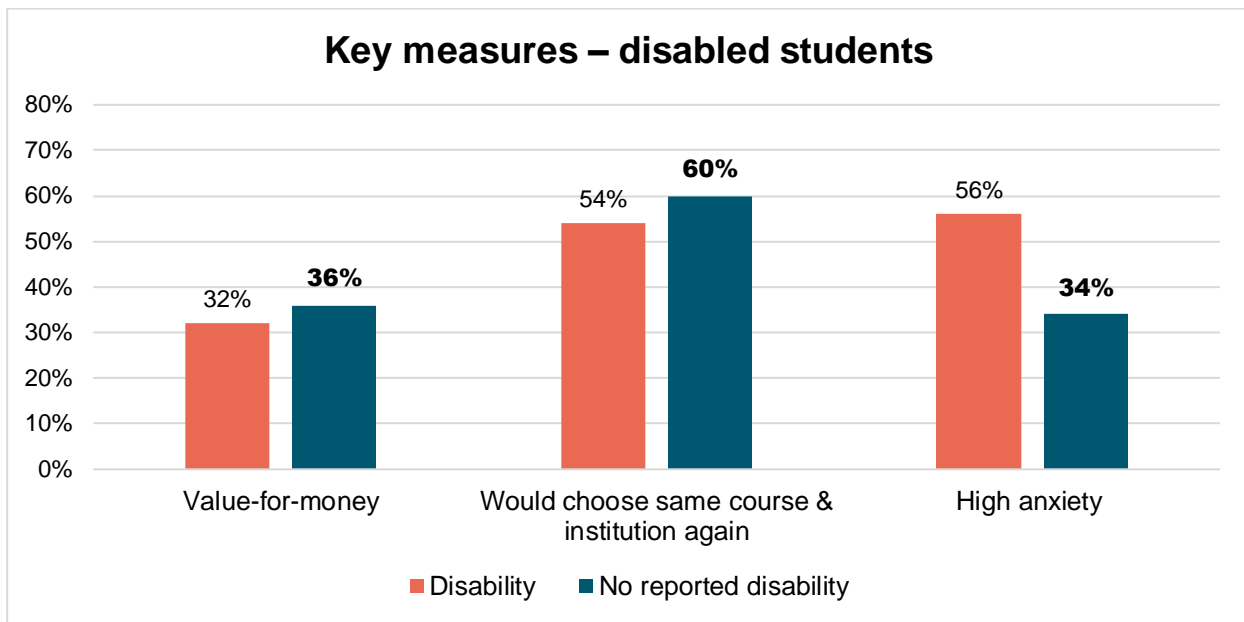
From the 10,142 full-time undergraduate students surveyed, 56% of disabled participants stated they had high anxiety compared to 34% of non-disabled participants. Furthermore, the report highlighted that the cost of living was a challenge for disabled learners, amplified by the costs of reasonable adjustments. One example of this provided in the report was insurmountable application and assessment hurdles to get support in place, including sometimes spending further to fund diagnostic assessments (Student Academic Experience Survey, 2022). The pandemic also increased the risk of heightened levels of stress and anxiety for disabled students. Disabled students may have experienced a flare-up of conditions, stress and trauma during the lockdown period. Consequently, their wellbeing should be thoroughly considered and supported whether they are transitioning into HE for the first time (Disabled Student Commission, 2020).

3.4   Administrative burdens

Disabled students are also faced with cumbersome and unmanageable administrative burdens. As noted by the Disabled Student Survey (GDI Hub and Snowdon Trust, 2021) "Administrative burdens create stress and anguish; taking valuable time away from study and social life". It is evident from the literature that administrative tasks can present barriers for disabled students in different ways. Coughlan and Lister (2018) found that many administrative processes can be inaccessible to disabled students or incompatible with their disabilities. For example, forms may be inaccessible with assistive technologies, inaccessible wording/language and heighted anxiety from interviews or meetings. During transition, disabled applicants may feel overwhelmed by the copious amounts of administrative tasks, and will need particular support in navigating this area.

3.5   Stigma and fear

There is also a fear which may be experienced by disabled students in that they will carry a 'label' which differentiates them from other students. In her study of stigma and student mental health in HE, Martin (2010) found that students who did not disclose because of fear of discrimination and disadvantage were more likely to struggle with their studies, and feel isolated and fearful. Disclosing a disability may feel for some students as a risk not only to their chances of success at application stage, but also in terms of being labelled in a way that may negatively impact on their settling into and successfully progressing through university. Furthermore, Järkestig et al., (2016), Kravets (2006), Madriaga (2007), Weedon and Riddell (2009) all report that visible disabilities are easier to disclose than more hidden disabilities like Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), ADHD, mental health or learning disabilities. Institutions must consider the messaging surrounding disability to attract disabled students to disclose and feel confident in sharing their conditions. As noted by the Disabled Student Commission (2021) HEIs should be encouraged to embed practices that only mean disabled students are disclosing their condition once, to relieve them of the burden of multiple disclosure and potential fear. Furthermore, appropriate disclosure when completing the UCAS Application allows University establishments to plan proper adjustments and to provide for support needs in a timely way.

3.6   Lack of inclusive teaching and learning

Disabled students also encounter challenges within their academic studies, such as a lack of inclusive design and inaccessible environments. The Disabled Students Survey reveals inaccessible events, premises and student housing, and DSUK recount details of 'delayed or inaccessible materials', uncaptioned lectures, a lack of reasonable adjustments or support, and other inaccessible features in teaching and learning (GDI Hub and Snowdon Trust, 2021; DSUK, 2022). Additionally, Mullins and Preyde found that in a number of university contexts, students felt that professors did not adapt teaching projects, lacked accessible information, lacked relevant technology and did not adapt exam schedules or formats (Mullins and Preyde, 2013). As a result, disabled students may feel excluded and be placed at a disadvantage. Johnson (2006) detailed that the negativity of faculty and administrative staff may prevent students, especially those with disabilities, from disclosing or enquiring about support. Furthermore, a recent study by Bazazandeh (2005) outlined that 25% of university staff were unwilling to adapt course material to suit disabled students' needs. The next section of this report, will outline the importance of inclusive design and guidance on reviewing their teaching and learning practices.

4.   Supporting the transition of disabled students

The transition from school, college or work to a full time university course can potentially be stressful and challenging for any student, however for students with a disability this can potentially be even more daunting (Carrol and Iles, 2006). Furthermore, Araujo, Carlin, Clarke, Morieson, Lukas and Wilson (2014) describe the transition into Higher Education as a process rather than an 'event'. A bridge between the formal and informal with students engaging in a range of social, cultural and academic transitions (Araujo et al., 2014). The following information details how HEP's can support disabled students to successfully transition to Higher Education with ease and success.

4.1   Preparing for transition

The Office for Students (OfS) very firmly places the responsibility on institutions to ensure that access to HE, inclusivity and learning and teaching environments meet the needs of all disabled students and is embedded in policy and practice at institutional level. It is vital that students transitioning to Higher Education (HE) have access to relevant and up to date information on support mechanisms and information on how to ensure the process runs smoothly and effectively. The latest UCAS report '**Next Steps: What is the experience of disabled students in education?**' states that disabled students need earlier support to transition to higher education in the UK. One key area noted by the report was the introduction of Adjustments Passports, not just for transition into employment, but into HE. Clare Marchant, Chief Executive of UCAS responded to this report commenting, "A key takeaway from our research is that students need earlier support to avoid deferring and so we are recommending the extension of Adjustment Passports, which currently only cover the transition from higher education into employment, to make it easier for students to progress to university, college or an apprenticeship, meaning more students can take that next step along with their peers". The Disabled Student Commission (DSC) has also developed a guidance document entitled 'Considerations for disabled students when applying to university in light of Covid-19' – which covers key areas such as accessing DSA, learning, as well as coping with social aspects of university. The Office of the independent adjudicator (OIA) highlights that students should be provided with with early information on:

- What is expected of disabled students, in relation to their specific course, school, or department.
- Accessing support and advice.
- Creating a safe environment to encourage students who have not declared that they are disabled to disclose this at any time.

The OIA (2022) suggest providers should do all they can to find out if a student is disabled, make available clear information about course content and teaching/assessment, respond to any information

a student has given about their disability/support needs and offer a guided tour of the campus and facilities before term starts.

In relation to mental health, Student Minds have produced Know Before You Go – a guide designed to support students, alongside useful resources on mental health available from Mind and The Student Room. Student Space which is run by Student Minds, provides access to information and advice. It is a dedicated support service for students which includes information about what support is available through your provider. Institutions should also be encouraged to adopt the University Mental Health Charter (Hughes and Spanner, 2019) a framework on which to develop health and wellbeing support and advice.

> **Mind your Mood – Queens University, Belfast**
>
> Mind Your Mood is the student-led mental health campaign to help raise awareness of mental health issues that affect students at Queen's University, Belfast and in wider society.
>
> The campaign seeks to remove the stigma attached to discussing mental health, encourage students to practice self-care, build resilience, and connect with internal and external support services.

4.2   Reducing the administrative burden

As discussed above, administration can be a significant burden and obstacle for disabled students during periods of transition. In the Disabled Students UK (DSUK) report 'Going back is not a choice' (2022) they call for "streamlined systems" and "improved communications between students, university departments and funding streams", that are "desperately required to reduce the time-consuming and mentally draining burden of administrative tasks". Lord Holmes also explored this issue in his report into DSA (2022) where it was highlighted that "administrative burden can act as a barrier to study rather than the support intended by the scheme". Tackling administrative burden, making administrative processes more flexible, empathetic and human-centered, is clearly a priority for institutions.

4.3   Enhancing induction and orientation

As noted by Brown and Parkin (2020, p.6) induction is a key juncture in the student lifecycle, bridging the transition from school/further education to higher education (HE), or from undergraduate to postgraduate study, and provides students with the knowledge to navigate the academic landscape and journey from arrival to graduation at their institution of choice. Research has shown that dropout rates are highest for students with disabilities during the first weeks of the semester (Wessel et al, 2009), therefore it is essential that institutions implement a student induction that is inclusive, to guarantee all disabled students have the tools and resources to adapt to university life. HEP's need to carefully create their induction and welcome activities, including events specifically aimed at disabled students, and the Disabled Student Commission (DSC) recommends that there is always an online option provided (Disabled Student Commission, 2020)

QAA (2015) warns against a 'standalone' induction process and supports the ideas that induction should be a long-term integrated process (Carroll and Ryan, 2005). This will allow disabled students to continue to access key information and resources, further on into their academic studies.

> **STAART Ambassadors – University of Greenwich**
>
> STAART is a disability and diversity focused initiative at the University of Greenwich. It was developed in 2007 in partnership with Aim higher. The services provide information and guidance to disabled and diverse students – both future and current – who have concerns about going to university or completing their studies. As part of the initiative, STAART Ambassadors are recruited each year to welcome and provide support to disabled students who have just started their academic studies.
>
> STAART Ambassadors are also involved in outreach activities in schools and colleges. Their work involves providing honest, impartial information about the realities of being a disabled student in higher education, presenting interactive workshops/webinars, taster days on campus, attending careers and higher education fairs, providing staff training, and promoting our social channels.

4.4   Developing an inclusive environment

The transition from a formalised school environment to higher education, can be a drastic shift in teaching, assessment and social environments. QAA (2022) highlights that schools and colleges tend to have rigid timetables, with full days of learning and numerous members of staff in classrooms. University students tend to have a lower duration of formal timetabled classes, with an expectation that

additional study will be completed independently by students. This change can be challenging for disabled students, who may feel overwhelmed in the initial stages of their programme, and struggle to cope with such a dramatic adjustment. In a model proposed by Nelson and Kift (2005), they suggest that 'transition pedagogy' needs to be embedded into the curriculum, that is, what is taught, how it is taught, how it is assessed and how this links to the lived experience of the students. More recently, Bates, Kaye and McCann (2017) went further than Nelson and Kift to suggest that learning environment (including people), physical environment, and workload (university and paid employment) are determinants in students' development of feelings of belonging and transition into higher education.

To ensure that students feel supported in the teaching and learning, and social environment, institutions should consider the implementation of inclusive practices to support disabled students. Lindsay (2007) supports the idea that inclusive education can encompass not only SEN and disability but can address religion, ethnicity, social class and other social dimensions (Lindsay, 2007, p.19). Thereby, institutions can benefit from this approach, not only with disabled students, but to all. Spratt and Florian (2015) have suggested that all staff members, both academic and professional services, should be informed and trained in the deliverance of inclusive pedagogy and universal designs for learning. Several institutions have already adopted training programmes for staff such as the *Teachability* proposal in Scotland and the CAST model of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Fuller argues, that "institutions should place more emphasis on developing inclusive curricula, incorporating principles of universal design. This would obviate the need to certify students as disabled and would remove the need for lecturers to make numerous ad hoc adjustments" (Fuller, 2008, p.28). Furthermore, Eckes & Ochoa (2005) note that accommodations themselves take time scheduling, learning software, waiting for appropriate formats, and dealing with professors' requirements, which can create heightened stress for the student, taking time away from both study time and non-academic activities. Inclusive design may mitigate some of these barriers, and therefore should be a serious consideration for HEP's.

> **Teachability: Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities**
>
> The Teachability Project was funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) between 1999 and 2006. The Project's first major publication, Teachability: Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities (2000) has been widely used by academic staff in the UK and beyond to evaluate the accessibility of course provision for disabled students. Teachability helped to promote awareness of what curriculum accessibility for disabled students means for course design and delivery.
>
> Despite funding ending, the University of Strathclyde will continue to host the Teachability materials and publication on its web-site to be used by academic staff within Strathclyde and elsewhere.

4.5   Designing an inclusive curriculum

An inclusive curriculum recognises that students have multiple intersecting identities that are shaped by wider environmental and personal influences, including disabilities. Hockings notes that institutions must embrace inclusivity and ensure, "pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all…as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others" (Hockings 2010, p. 1). As noted by Padden, O'Connor and Barrett (2017), inclusion is not an add-on, and it should be at the heart of a university's mission in achieving excellence in education and scholarship. Creating an environment and curriculum that facilitates diversity, encourages interaction and ensures equal opportunity for all to demonstrate their understanding can cause students to feel accepted, comfortable, appreciated and safe (Wentzell, Richlin, and Cox, 2011).

Morgan and Houghton (2011) point out key principles regarding inclusive curriculum design:

Key Principles of Inclusive Curriculum Design	
Anticipatory	Consideration of existing and prospective students, reducing the needs for reactive and individual responses.
Flexible	Versatile and responsive to evolving student population.
Accountable	Encourages staff to be responsible for progress.
Collaborative	Builds on partnership with students, colleagues and external stakeholders.
Transparent	Highlights reasons for design decisions.
Equitable	Decisions are fair, open and transparent for all.

4.6 'What works' – Examples of good practice in inclusive teaching and learning

Resource	Details
+ Advance HE. (2018). Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum: A programme standard. Advance HE. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/embedding-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-curriculum-programme-standard	This resource contains advice on embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the development processes for, and the final configurations of a programme of study, the various pathways a learner might take in traversing it, and the knowledge with which they will interact along the way.
+ UCL. UCL Inclusive Curriculum Healthcheck. UCL. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bame-awarding-gap-project/ucl-inclusive	A resource designed to support staff to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle.
+ Kingston University – Inclusive Curriculum Framework - Inclusive Curriculum Framework - Our inclusive curriculum - Equality, diversity and inclusion - Kingston University London	Advice on a universal approach to course design intended to improve the experience, skills and attainment of all students.
+ University College, Dublin - Universal Design for Curriculum Design - Full Book.pdf (ucd.ie)	A series of case studies highlighting good practice in the adoption of Universal Design for Learning.
+ UCL. (2019, June 11). Using peer dialogue to promote inclusive teaching practice. Teaching & Learning. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2019/jun/using-peer-dialogue-promote-inclusive-teaching-practice	Top tips on promoting peer engagement for inclusive curriculum design.
+ Trinity College Dublin – Inclusive Curriculum Project EDI Inclusive Curriculum - School of Law - Trinity College Dublin (tcd.ie)	Detailing the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum (Trinity-INC) Project aimed at embedding principles of diversity, equality and inclusion across all curricula at Trinity College Dublin.

4.7   Key considerations in teaching and learning after Covid- 19

HEI's should also consider the impact of the pandemic on disabled students. Kotera et al (2019) and Pearson et al (2019) highlight that, even before the pandemic, many students chose online or distance learning, finding it preferable to face-to-face learning. Students found that online learning gives them more 'control over studies' (Kotera et al, 2019), they can find it more flexible (Pearson et al, 2019), it can reduce anxiety (DSUK, 2022), or that it requires them to expend less energy on travel and being present (GDI Hub and Snowdon Trust, 2021; DSUK Disabled Students' Commission Annual Report 2021-2022 Disabled Students' Commission 23 2022). Therefore, retaining an online or blended approach to learning should be a key consideration when moving forward beyond the pandemic. The Student Loans Company (2020) have said that no extra mentoring sessions can be authorised to assist with stress due to Covid-19 as this is not a study-related concern. However, exacerbation of stress due to Covid-19 is having an effect on students' mental health and their ability to complete academic work. This should therefore be a key consideration for HE providers when supporting the transition of disabled learners.

5.   Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, schools, colleges and HEI's must ensure they continue to support and guide disabled students through all stages of their transition to Higher Education. Embedding and adopting best practice and implementing principles of inclusive design, will ensure disabled students have the tools and strategies to overcome barriers and challenges. As we emerge from the pandemic and move towards a different world of study and work, educational providers must continue to implement appropriate support structures and guidance for disabled students, from application through to graduation. Advance HE has endeavoured to provide a concrete and robust set of recommendations to allow institutions to embed and adopt good practice in supporting disabled students during transition:

- Ensure Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in post primary education are aware of the differences in practices between school and university including a recognition of terminology differences, differences in processes and challenges disabled students may face, to allow them to better prepare disabled pupils.
- Ensure disabled students have access to a range of resources and online tools to equip them with relevant guidance on transition and allow them to be better prepared, both physically and mentally.
- Ensure administration tasks are accessible and flexible for disabled students.
- Implement a robust induction and orientation process, tailored for disabled applicants and students. This should include ensuring that induction material is available to students beyond transition.
- Ensure all staff, in both schools and Higher Education (HE) - including academic and professional services - are equipped with current knowledge and information on inclusive design and pedagogy to support disabled students. This may include staff training and development, the development of resources, sharing of best practice and an ongoing programme review.
- Ensure robust and supportive systems for students with mental health conditions
- Celebrate disabled students within the school/Higher Education (HE) institution, to promote feelings of belonging and the removal of stigma.

6.   References

Araujo, N., Carlin, D., Clarke, B., Morieson, L., Lukas, K. and Wilson, R. (2014) Belonging in the first year: A creative discipline cohort case study. The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 5, (2), 21-31.

Autistic Self Advocacy Network. 2022. Identity-First Language - Autistic Self Advocacy Network. [ONLINE] Available at: https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/identity-first-language/ [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Barazandeh, G. (2005). 'Attitudes toward disabilities and reasonable accommodation at the university'. *The Undergraduate Research Journal, 7,* pp. 1-12.

Barnes, C. (2008) Generating change: disability, culture and art: Journal of Disability and International Development 1: 4-13. Ansgabe.

Bates, E., Kaye, L. and McCann, J. (2017) A snapshot of the student experience: exploring student satisfaction through the use of photographic elicitation, Journal of Further and Higher Education, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1359507

Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M. & Shaw, L. (2000) *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools* (Bristol, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education).

Brown, G and Parkin, D (2020). Induction - Creating Socially Distanced Campuses and Education Project Leadership Intelligence Report, York. Available at: www.advancehe.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/creating-socially-distanced-campuses-and-education-projectleadership-intelligence

Carroll, J. and Ryan, J. (2005) Teaching International Students: Improving Learning for All, London: Routledge.

Carroll, J., & Iles, J. (2006). An Assessment of Anxiety Levels in Dyslexic Students in Higher Education. The British journal of educational psychology. 76. 651-62. 10.1348/000709905X66233.

CAST (2020). *About Universal Design for Learning*. Available from: http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html [Accessed 6th May 2020]

Corbett, J. (1996) Bad Mouthing: The Language of Special Needs. London and Washington DC: The Falmer Press.

Coughlan, T and Lister, K (2018). The accessibility of administrative processes: Assessing the impacts on students in higher education. doi.org/10.1145/3192714.3192820

Disabled Student Commission (2020) Considerations for disabled students when applying to university in light of Covid-19, York: Advance HE.

Disabled Student Commission (2020) *Three months to make a difference*, York: Advance HE.

Disabled Student Commission (2021) *Considerations for disabled applicants applying to undergraduate courses*, York: Advance HE.

Disabled Student Commission (2021) *Exploring the impact of Covid-19 on disabled students' experiences*, York: Advance HE.

Disabled Student Commission (2022) *Disabled Students' Commission Annual Report 2020-2021: Enhancing the disabled student experience*, York: Advance HE.

Disabled Students UK (2022). Going back is not a choice. Available at disabledstudents.co.uk/not-a-choice/

Eckes, S. E., & Ochoa, T. A. (2005). Students with Disabilities: Transitioning from High School to Higher Education. *American Secondary Education*, *33*(3), 6–20. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41064551

English federation of disability sport (2017) *Draft statement & policy Document,* United Kingdom: English Federation of Disability Sport.

Equality Act 2010. 2022. Equality Act 2010. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Fuller, M., Georgeson, J., Healey, M., Hurst, K., Kelly, S., Ridell, S., Roberts, H., and Weedon., E. (2009) *Improving Disabled Students Learning*, London: Routledge.

Gannon, K. (2018, February 27). The Case for Inclusive Teaching. The Chronicle of Higher Education. https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-case-for-inclusiveteaching/

Global Disability Innovation Hub, Snowdon Trust (2021). Disabled Students Survey. Available at disabilityinnovation.com/news/disabled-students-survey-1

GOV.UK (2022) *New government 'passport' to help disabled graduates get in to employment,* Available at: *https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-passport-to-help-disabled-graduates-get-in-to-employment* (Accessed: 7th October 2022).

GOV.UK. 2022. Student finance for undergraduates: Overview - GOV.UK . [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/student-finance. [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Haller, B. Dorries, B. Rahn, J. (2006) Media labelling versus the US disability community identity: A study of shifting cultural language. Disability and Society 21:61-75.

Hockings, C. (2010) Towards Inclusive Learning and Teaching – Principles into Practice. Workshop presentation at the *Research Conference: Promoting Equity in Higher Education*, Nottingham, 27–28 January

Hughes, G and Spanner, L (2019). The University Mental Health Charter, Leeds: Student Minds. Available at www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html

Järkestig Berggren, U., Rowan, D., Bergbäck, E. and Blomberg, B. (2016) 'Disabled Students' Experiences of Higher Education in Sweden, the Czech Republic, and the United States – A Comparative Institutional Analysis', Disability and Society, 31, 3: 339–356.

Johnson, A. L. (2006) *Students with disabilities in postsecondary education: Barriers to Success and implication to professionals,* Available at: *http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas2006* (Accessed: 25th March 2018).

Kift, S (2015) 'A decade of Transition Pedagogy: A quantum leap in conceptualising the first year experience'. HERDSA Review of Higher Education, 2, 51–86

Kotera et al (2019) Towards another kind of borderlessness: online students with disabilities. doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2019.1600369

Lindsay, G. (2007) 'Educational psychology and the effectiveness of inclusive education/mainstreaming', *British Journal of Educational Psychology ,* 77(1), pp. 1-24.

Lord Hulmes of Richmond (2022) REPORT INTO THE DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE (DSA), London: House of Lords.

Martin N 2008: REAL services to assist university students who have Asperger syndrome. NADP Technical briefing 2008/4. Available from https://nadp-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/REAL-Services-to-assist-students-who-have-Asperger-Syndrome.pdf (subscribers only) Accessed 28th October 2018

Martin, J. M (2010) 'Stigma and Student Mental Health in Higher Education', Higher Education Research and Development, 29:3, 259-274, DOI: 10.1080/07294360903470969.

Mittler, P. (2000) Working Towards Inclusive Education: *Social Contexts*, London: Routledge.

Morgan, H., Houghton, A. (2011) Inclusive curriculum design in higher education: Considerations for effective practice across and within subject areas. AdvanceHE

Morgan, H., Houghton, A. (2011) Inclusive curriculum design in higher education: Considerations for effective practice across and within subject areas. AdvanceHE

Mullins, L., and Preyde, M. (2013) 'The Lived Experience of Students with an Invisible Disability at a Canadian University', Disability & Society, 28(2), pp. 147-160.

Neves, J., and Brown, A. (2022) Student Academic Experience Survey 2022, York: Advance HE.

Padden, L., O'Connor, J.J. and Barrett T. (2017) *Universal Design for Curriculum Design Case Studies from University College Dublin*, Dublin : Access and Lifelong Learning, University College Dublin.

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2018) *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: Collaborative provision, and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning),* Available at: *http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/partnerships/educational-partnerships/staff-induction/qaa-collaborative-code-of-practice.pdf* (Accessed: 19th March 2018).

Richards, R. (2008) Writing the othered self. Auto ethnography and the problem of objectification in writing about disability and illness. The Journal of Qualitative Health Research 18.12:1717-1728.

Richlin, L., Wentzell, G. W. and Cox, M. D. (2014) 'How Are We All Doing? Evaluating Faculty Teaching and Assessing Student Learning: A Message From the Editors', Journal on Excellence in College Teaching, 25(2), pp. 1–4. Available at: https://search-ebscohost-com.queens.ezp1.qub.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=98323036&site=eds-live&scope=site (Accessed: 20 June 2022).

Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (2018) *The Teachability Project ,* Available at: *http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/abouttheproject.html* (Accessed: 20th March 2018).

Silvers, A. (2002) The crooked timber of humanity: Disability, ideology, aesthetic. In Corker, M. Shakespeare, T. (Eds.) 2002. *Embodying Disability Theory. Disability and Postmodernism*. London Continuum. 228-244.

Simpson, K. and Tan, W. (2009) A home away from home?: Chinese student evaluations of an overseas study experience, *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13, 1, 5-21

Singh, P (2014) 'Persons with Disabilities and Economic inequalities in India', *Indian Anthropological Association,* 44(2), pp. 65-80.

Singh, P. (2014) 'Persons with Disabilities and Economic Inequalities in India', *Indian Anthropologist,* 14(2), pp. 65–80 [Online]. Available at: *www.jstor.org/stable/43899390* (Accessed: 14th October 2017).

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. 2022. Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/10/part/2/chapter/2 [Accessed 10 October 2022].

Spratt, J., and Florian, L. (2015), 'Inclusive pedagogy: From learning to action. Supporting each individual in the context of 'everybody'' *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 49, pp. 89-96.

Stakes, R. and Hornby, G. (2000). Meeting special needs in mainstream schools. London: D. Fulton Publishers.

Student Loans Company (2020). Covid-19 Stakeholders Questions v.3 published on 9th April 2020. Available from: https://nadp-uk.org/covid-19-resources-for-members-and-colleagues/ [Accessed 6th May 2020]

Student Loans Company. 2022. Policy - SFE, Practitioners. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy/ [Accessed 10 October 2022].

The Office of the independent adjudicator (OIA) (2022) *SUPPORTING DISABLED STUDENTS,* Available at: *https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/good-practice-framework/supporting-disabled-students/* (Accessed: 7th October 2022).

UCAS (2022) STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND LEARNING DIFFERENCES, Available at: https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/disabled-students (Accessed: 7th October 2022).

UCAS (2022) *What is the experience of Disabled Students in Higher Education?*, London: UCAS.

Valentine, J. (2002) 'Naming and narrating disability in Japan' in Corker, M. Shakespeare, T. Eds. 2002 Embodying Disability Theory. Disability and Postmodernism London. Continuum. NY: 213-227.

Weedon, E. and Riddell, S. (2009) 'Troublesome Transitions?: Disabled Students' Entry Into and Journey Through Higher Education' in M. Fuller, J. Georgeson, M. Healey, A. Hurst, K. Kelly, S. Riddell, H. Roberts and E. Weedon (eds) Improving Disabled Students' Learning: Experiences and Outcomes, London: Taylor and Francis.

Wessel, R. D., Jones, J. A., Markle, L., & Westfall, C. (2009). 'Retention and graduation of students with disabilities: Facilitating student success'. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 21, pp. 116–125.

Wilson, L. & Martin, N. (2018) Models of Disability affect Language: Implications for Disability, Equality and Inclusivity Practice. *Journal of Inclusive Practice in Further and Higher Education.* Issue 10.1. pp. 4-19.

Wright, J. (2022) Planning for transition, SEN Magazine. [ONLINE] Available at: https://senmagazine.co.uk/content/education/transition/1766/planning-for-transition/[Accessed 10 October 2022].

Contact us

+44 (0) 3300 416201
enquiries@advance-he.ac.uk
www.advance-he.ac.uk
 in f @AdvanceHE

Registered Office
Innovation Way, York Science Park
Heslington, York YO10 5BR

‒

First Floor, Napier House
24 High Holborn, London WC1V6AZ

‒

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format,
please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE:
+44 (0) 3300 416201 or surveys@advance-he.ac.uk