



Social Work: Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure

Faculty of Health and
Life Sciences

Placements and Partnerships
Office

Social Work: Reasonable Adjustments Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

Fundamental to all social work programmes is the requirement to undertake and be assessed in a practice based placement. Northumbria University is committed to ensuring that disabled students have the same opportunities as non-disabled students to access social work placements. In achieving this Faculty Placements Office is mindful of:

1.1 *The Equality Act 2010*

This Act applies in England, Wales and Scotland. It protects individuals from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. It does this by specifying a number of *protected characteristics*. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or having a child
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national group
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation

Disability is defined in the Act as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial or long term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities. In the Act, substantial is defined as more than minor or trivial and long term is defined as twelve months or more.

As such people with a range of health conditions or disabilities are included in the definition.

Specifically, people who may not usually describe themselves as disabled may be protected by the Act if the effects of their condition or impairment are negative, long term and substantial on normal day to day activities.

The implication of the Act for HEI's is to ensure all students and applicants are treated fairly. This includes making *reasonable adjustments* for disabled people. Like all public bodies they are subject to the 'public sector duty'. As such they must actively promote equality of opportunity and foster good relationships between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not. When a student is allocated to a placement area, the placement provider is required to treat the student 'as an employee' and, as such, is required to put in place reasonable adjustments. There is therefore an overlap in the responsibilities of the University and the placement provider in terms of making reasonable adjustments.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has responsibility for the promotion and enforcement of equality and non-discrimination laws in England, Scotland and Wales:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/>

1.2 *Health and Care Professions Council (2012)*

As the Regulatory Body for the social work profession, the HCPC sets the *Standards for Education and Training* (SETs) required to meet their approval and monitoring processes. These include:

SET 2.7 – *The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.*

SET 3.11 – *There must be adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings.*

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SET 5.5 – *The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these may be implemented and monitored.*

1.3 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):UK Quality Code for Higher Education

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality

Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching

Indicator 2 – Learning and teaching activities provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Indicator 3 – A commitment to equity guides Higher Education in enabling student development and achievement.

Indicator 5 – To enable student development and achievement, Higher Education providers put into place policies, practices and systems that facilitate successful transitions and academic progression.

Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education provisions with others

Indicator 12 – When making arrangements to deliver a programme with others, degree awarding bodies fulfil the requirement of any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB).

2. Policy Statement

To discharge its duty to the relevant Acts and meet the standards of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), The Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, in consultation with placement providers, has agreed the following policy and procedure to facilitate reasonable adjustments that support students with a disability, to access and make full use of off campus practice placements.

This policy and associated procedure applies to all programmes in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences that require student allocation to a practice placement as part of a programme of study. In considering the need for **reasonable adjustments** the following approach is adopted:

What adjustments are reasonable for an institution/organisation to take will depend on individual circumstances, for example, the type of work placement being provided, the nature and length of the placement and the importance of the placement to the course or to the particular student's learning. The implications of a student's disability are also relevant in the context of a placement providers own Reasonable Adjustment policies and procedures and where appropriate the need to initiate organisational health and safety risk assessments.

Some of the other factors to be taken into account in determining what is reasonable are:-

- The financial resources available to the placement provider
- The cost or practicality of making a particular adjustment
- Grants or loans available to assist disabled students with reasonable adjustment such as the Disabled Students' Allowances
- The extent to which aids or services will otherwise be provided to disabled students
- The need to maintain academic and other standards as prescribed by Professional/Regulatory Bodies including the HCPC, TCSW and QAA
- The relevant interests of other students / individuals

Some examples of adjustments that may be made include:-

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- Variation/flexibility in working hours (including to accommodate rehabilitation or regular treatment)
- Provision of a support worker, where appropriate
- Modification of or provision of specific equipment, eg, a chair, a mouse, specialist software
- Change in work allocated
- Relocation to a different practice placement
- Adjustments to premises
- Modification of Instructions, processes or procedures

4. Procedure

4.1 Disability Disclosed on Application or at Interview (Appendix 1)

If disability is declared on the relevant application form or at interview, the Admissions Tutor will inform the relevant Programme Leader who in consultation with the applicant will recommend referral to Occupational Health/Disability Services to determine whether any reasonable adjustments may need to be made within the practice environment and whether it will impact on the applicant's ability to either access or make use of learning opportunities when allocated to practice placements. **This referral will be made within 1 week of receiving notification of the disability.**

The Admissions Tutor/ Programme Leader must advise the applicant that any offer of a place on the programme will be conditional upon:

- (a) Referral for Occupational Health/Disability Services assessment at least two and no later than four weeks before the commencement of the programme.
- (b) Occupational Health/Disability Services providing reports following such assessment usually within four weeks or at least four weeks before the commencement date of the first placement that will indicate whether:
 - **No reasonable adjustments are required or**
 - **There is a requirement for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made with a clear indication of what these should be or**
 - **No reasonable adjustments can be made**
- (c) The placement providers' capacity to meet reasonable adjustments identified in the Occupational Health/Disability Services Report(s)
- (d) The availability of appropriate practice placements in partner organisations, which the applicant/student will be able to access/make effective use of.

The relevant Programme Leader will liaise with the applicant throughout this process

4.1.1 Receipt of the declaration of a disability (i.e. via application form or interview)

Within one week of receiving the declaration, The Admissions Tutor (with student's consent) will inform the relevant Programme Leader who will complete and submit Form SWRA1 – Notification of applicant/student disability and forward to the University Occupational Health and the Disability Services Department to

- Initiate Occupational Health/Disability Services Assessments

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- Dependent upon outcome of Occupational Health Assessment / Disability Services Report(s) and in consultation with Programme Leader confirm suitability of applicant to meet the demands of the programme

4.1.2 No requirement for a Reasonable Adjustment - If there is no requirement for adjustment and the disability is such that it is not likely to prevent the applicant from accessing/making effective use of practice placement learning opportunities then a place on the programme would be confirmed by the Programme Leader at this point subject to the applicant meeting all other requirements for access to the programme. The prospective student will be advised of the procedure/process, should there be a future requirement for a further assessment of reasonable adjustments to be made. The outcome of the assessment will be forwarded to the Practice Learning Lead.

4.1.3 Reasonable Adjustment required

(a) If the report indicates that there is a requirement for 'reasonable adjustment' to be made the relevant Programme Leader will communicate the outcome of the assessment to the Practice Learning Coordinator within 4 weeks, and not less than 4 weeks before the date of commencement of the initial placement. The Practice Learning Lead will call a Placements Planning Meeting.

(b) The Practice Learning Lead will meet with the prospective student who will be invited to have someone accompany them for support purposes; this is usually the Guidance Tutor.

(c) The aim of this meeting will be to plan the student's initial placement and as many subsequent placements in advance as is possible at this time. Issues such as travel details, potential adjustments and support required will be discussed – this will allow a plan to be agreed by all parties. Further placement planning meetings may need to be reconvened prior to subsequent placements, of if there is any change in a student's/applicant's condition.

(d) It may be necessary to refer the student to the University Occupational Health Services prior to their first placement in order that a Risk Assessment (Work Place Assessment) may be carried out in the potential practice placement area(s), or placement providers may invoke relevant local policies to initiate a Risk Assessment. The Practice Learning Lead will advise on the specific requirements of the placement provider organisation.

(e) It must be acknowledged that changes to placements may have to be made due to circumstances beyond the University's / Placement Provider's control and that if no reasonable adjustment can be made, an alternative placement will be sought.

(f) The Placements Administrator, with support from the Programme Team, will liaise with the Placement Provider to arrange appropriate placements and confirm that reasonable adjustments can be made. The planned programme of placements and any reasonable adjustments made are subject to periodic review and/or if there is a significant change in the nature of the student's disability or planned programme of allocation.

4.1.4 No reasonable adjustments can be made - University Occupational Health/Disability Service identify that no satisfactory/reasonable adjustments can be made and make recommendation that student is not able to complete the programme. Applicant referred to Student Services / Careers Guidance to explore options for alternate programmes of study.

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4.2 Disability Disclosed During the Programme of Study

It is strongly recommended that Social Work students with a known disability gain access to the full range of support available.

Whilst applicants to higher education have a statutory duty to disclose information about disabilities or long-term health conditions for nursing courses across Britain, and for social work and teaching courses in England and Wales, this does not always happen. Students are often uncertain about what information they have to disclose or may be anxious that in disclosing information, they may somehow be disadvantaged or discriminated against.

If it becomes apparent or the student's Guidance Tutor, Practice Assessor or Link Worker believes that the student has a disability or the student discloses to their Guidance Tutor, Practice Assessor or Link Worker that they have a disability this (with the student's consent) should be referred immediately to the Guidance Tutor or Practice Learning Lead who must inform the student's Programme Leader at the earliest opportunity who will then advise the student that a referral to Occupational Health/Disability Services may be required to ensure the student can meet the requirements of the programme.

4.2.1 The relevant Programme Manager or the Practice Learning Co-ordinator will complete will complete and submit Form SWRA1 – Notification of applicant/student disability within one week of being notified that a student may have a disability to the University Occupational Health and the Disability Services Department to:

- Initiate Occupational Health/Disability Services Assessments
- With the student's consent, inform the student's Guidance Tutor

(a) If it is felt that the disability is such that it materially impacts on the students ability to continue on their current placement then consideration may be needed given to removing the student from the placement area / or an alternate placement is provided until the Occupational Health Assessment is completed

(b) Occupational Health/Disability Services will provide a report following such an assessment usually within four weeks. The report will indicate whether:

- **No reasonable adjustments are required or**
- **There is a requirement for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made with a clear indication of what these should be or**
- **No reasonable adjustments can be made**

(c) Placement providers will determine whether any appropriate reasonable adjustments can be made

(d) The availability of appropriate practice placements, with partner organisations, which the applicant/student will be able to access/make effective use of

The Programme Leader or Practice Learning Lead will liaise with the student throughout this process

4.2.2 No requirement for a Reasonable Adjustment - If there is no requirement for adjustment and the disability is such that it is not likely to prevent the applicant from accessing/making effective use

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of practice placement learning opportunities then the students programme will continue as planned. The student will be advised of the procedure/process, should there be a requirement in the future for a reasonable adjustment to be made.

4.2.3 Reasonable Adjustment required

(a) If the report indicates that there is a requirement for 'reasonable adjustment' to be made the relevant Programme Leader will communicate the outcome of the assessment to the Practice Learning Coordinator within 4 weeks, and not less than 4 weeks before the date of commencement of the initial placement. The Practice Learning Lead will call a Placements Planning Meeting.

(b) The Practice Learning Lead will meet with the prospective student who will be invited to have someone accompany them for support purposes; this is usually the Guidance Tutor.

(c) The aim of this meeting will be to plan the student's future placements as far in advance as is possible at the time. Issues such as travel details, potential adjustments and support required will be discussed and the plan will be agreed by all parties.

(d) It may be necessary to refer the student to the University Occupational Health Services prior to their first placement in order that a Risk Assessment (Work Place Assessment) may be carried out in the potential practice placement area(s), or placement providers may invoke relevant local policies to initiate a Risk Assessment. The Practice Learning Lead will advise on the specific requirements of the placement provider organisation.

4.2.4 No reasonable adjustments can be made – Should the University Occupational Health/Disability Service identify that no satisfactory/reasonable adjustments can be made; the matter will be referred to the Professional Suitability Panel for review, with the potential for a student's removal from the programme (Vice Chancellor's decision).

4.3 Monitoring and Review

4.3.1 Placement staff (Guidance Tutors, Practice Assessors and Link Workers etc) in consultation with the student will monitor any adjustments in placement to ensure they are working well for the student and that they are responsive to the student's current needs. Any review of reasonable adjustments should be recorded and a copy sent to the Practice Learning Lead.

4.3.2 Any complaints of harassment and/or discrimination on a work placement should be reported to the placement provider and investigated promptly. The aim should always be to resolve complaints locally and speedily to minimise disruption to the placement. Northumbria University may in some cases need to terminate the placement if the provider fails to ensure that the student will not face further harassment or discrimination. In such cases, alternative arrangements need to be put in place to allow the student to gain appropriate work experience elsewhere.

4.3.3 Students should be offered a debriefing session by their Guidance Tutor within one month of the end of their placement, to discuss their placement experience within a context of personal development.

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4.4 Evaluation and Development

Placements that make reasonable adjustments in order to accommodate students with a disability will be evaluated by the student at the end of the placement to ensure that they are providing appropriate standards and learning opportunities.

The Guidance Tutor will provide the student with a copy of **Form SWRA2 - Placement evaluation after reasonable adjustment/s**. Completed copies of this form will be retained within the student's file and by the Practice learning Lead and the Practice Placement Office. Feedback will be provided to the placement providers (via the Practice Learning Lead) from the Guidance Tutor within four weeks of the student completing the placement to help improve and develop provision for disabled students. Lessons learned from the evaluation will also be fed into the strategic planning of placements approving placements.

The process for supporting students who require reasonable adjustments will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Faculty Director of Student Experience and the Director of Placements.

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Appendix 1: Process to be followed if disability disclosed on application or at interview

