

Disability Policy for Students and Apprentices

1. Statement

Plymouth Marjon University (PMU) aims to be an inclusive learning environment and to embed a culture of inclusion for all disabled learners (students and apprentices).

In defining 'disabled learners', the Equality Act 2010 definition of a disabled person clearly states: -

'A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

This can include, but is not limited to, long-term health conditions and disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, ME or Myalgia Encephalomyelitis (also known as chronic fatigue syndrome), diagnoses of cancer, physical conditions limiting mobility; anxiety, depression and other mental ill health conditions; as well as those conditions under the umbrella of ADHD, autism spectrum conditions and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.

A disability diagnosis is not required to be considered disabled; self-diagnosis is sufficient but medical evidence to show such an impairment may be necessary (for example, when applying for [Disabled Student's Allowances](#)).

1.2 Policy Aims

- Provide fair and equitable access for disabled learners to support them to realise their ambitions.
- Support disabled learners in achieving their academic and personal goals.
- Support learners by outlining institutional expectations for the implementation of reasonable adjustments.

2. Guiding Principles (Values)

The University is continually adapting and as it does so, we strive to provide an inclusive environment where disabled students and apprentices can demonstrate their full potential and succeed in their studies.

The institutional commitment to inclusivity can be seen through recommendations within the Marjon Curriculum Framework where principles such as the following are believed will help to build an inclusive learning environment: -

- Pedagogic Principle - Caring & Inclusive (one of six principles that inform teaching practice).

- Assessment policy changes - providing choice of at least two assessments at each submission point (to avoid unnecessary adjustments).

We appreciate that providing an environment which aims to be inclusive is not always enough to ensure everyone's success. Access to additional individual 'reasonable adjustments' helps to support independence, encourage curiosity and ultimately support students and apprentices to realise their ambitions. Learners who wish to have additional reasonable adjustments in place will need to share their disability to the University.

3. Scope & Responsibilities

3.1 Plymouth Marjon University will: -

- Strive to provide an environment, both in the physical sense and in terms of university policies, practices, behaviours and values that are inclusive of disabled learners, and will expect staff to take responsibility for embedding inclusivity into the design of everything they do. This includes considering inclusion in any physical campus changes and taking opportunities to increase university community awareness of the range of disabilities and their impact.
- Encourage those, *who wish to gain support*, to share the effects of their disability, long term health condition or neurodivergence and their experiences of studying at the university, as early as possible, with appropriate staff (those who are able to support them with individual adjustments or who are responsible for the inclusive environment).

3.2 The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will: -

- Ensure the university meets its obligations under equality legislation.
- Monitor the implementation of this policy and the related processes/practices and recommend changes where appropriate.
- Oversee and implement training and awareness raising activities for staff, together with the People team, Line Managers, Deans of Schools and Academic Managers.

3.3 All Staff will: -

- Take responsibility to ensure they are aware of the details of this policy (including the section on data protection and confidentiality) and any other related policies. Supporting disabled students and apprentices is a shared staff responsibility – not a function of the Disability (DIAS) team alone.
- Develop and maintain inclusive practices related to the area of work in which they operate, striving to reduce the need for additional reasonable adjustments and always treating others with dignity and respect.

- Respect the language and identity of the individual in terms of how they describe themselves and their disability or health condition (for example, if they refer to themselves as an autistic person instead of a person with autism, or they prefer a specific term or abbreviation such as ME), mirroring their preference.
- In line with the Student and Apprentice Disability Procedure for Staff, they will:
 - Record any sharing of disability, together with any reasonable adjustments they have supported, for a disabled learner with respect for preferences, accuracy and in line with information sharing guidelines.
 - Work with the individual to support the impact of their disability, health condition or neurodivergence.
 - Strive to be anticipatory in making reasonable adjustments and take proportionate steps to overcome barriers.
 - Where necessary, seek advice and guidance from the DIAS team on best practice and choices available.
 - Maintain confidentiality and seek permission from the individual to share information, wherever possible.

3.4 Disability (DIAS) staff will: -

- Provide professional, non-judgemental information, advice and guidance to all students and apprentices with additional needs, which will include but not be limited to:
 - how to access reasonable adjustments within the university.
 - how to access an individual support plan (where applicable).
 - how to apply for external funding such as that offered through Disabled Students Allowance or Apprentice funding.
- Be highly trained, knowledgeable and experienced, in order to provide other staff across the university with advice and support, on request, to enable them to be able to offer reasonable adjustments to disabled learners.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times in line with agreements and other legal precedents.

3.5 Students and Apprentices needing support will in accordance with guidance set out on our webpages: -

- Share relevant information about their disability, health condition, or neurodivergence to appropriate staff to enable support and remove barriers to study.
- Provide supporting documentation to the Disability and Inclusion Advice Service (DIAS) where possible, to facilitate timely and accurate implementation of reasonable adjustments.

- Register with DIAS or engage with staff who can directly support their academic progress, where appropriate.
- Understand that essential information may be shared across university departments to enable effective support.
- Share support needs in advance of key academic activities (e.g. at least 10 working days before an exam) to allow sufficient time for adjustments.
- Apply for external disability-related funding (e.g. Disabled Students Allowance or Apprentice funding) where relevant to access specialist support or equipment.
- Treat all members of the university community with dignity and respect.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments provide support to ensure that disabled learners can participate in higher education without disadvantage. The Equality Act 2010 states that Universities have an anticipatory duty to make reasonable adjustments for learners in relation to: -

- A provision, criterion or practice (these can include changes for exams or assessments and field trips).
- Physical features of premises (for instance, ensuring alternative access via ramps or lifts where there are stairs).
- Auxiliary aids and services (this can include any equipment/service which can remove a disadvantage such as providing a vibrating pillow alert in accommodation; or provision of an ergonomic chair or BSL services in lectures).

In assessing what is reasonable, the University will consider how effective the adjustment is in removing the barrier, the resources available to the University and the cost of the adjustment, as well as how practical it is to make the change.

In terms of academic adjustments, the University will sometimes need to heed advice from professional accrediting bodies where appropriate. In considering changes to assessments and meeting other course needs, Programme Leaders will need to refer to the competency standards for the course. Competency standards are used to ensure learners have the level of competence needed to progress or successfully complete their programme of study and must be a “proportionate means to a legitimate aim”. The aim must be legal and non-discriminatory, appropriate and necessary (refer to NADP/Advance HE guidance on competency standards and other resources for guidance in this respect).

Whilst greater support in accessing reasonable adjustments can be offered to students and apprentices when they register with DIAS (and a full package of support can be put in place when they are able to provide supporting documentation), it is important to note that a learner can share a need for reasonable adjustments and may raise this

directly with the team or staff able to effect the change (for instance the Programme Leader or the Estates team). Reasonable adjustments should be made on an individual basis through discussion between the student or apprentice and those who can affect the change. The following are some examples of reasonable adjustments, that academic staff might be able to effect (with support from the DIAS team if requested), they may not apply to all disabled learners and are not an exhaustive list: -

- Assessment changes - for instance provision of an alternative assessment form where it can still meet the learning objectives (for example a change from a live presentation to a pre-recorded piece or a change of type of assessment) on the original hand-in date.
- Changes to placement attendance to ensure that opportunities are physically accessible and appropriate.
- Materials being provided in advance of lectures and seminars to allow additional time for reading and ensuring handouts are suitable for all disabled learners.

Other reasonable adjustments are generally only made with the support of the DIAS team; these may not apply to all and are not an exhaustive list: -

- Exam arrangements such as additional time or use of a computer.
- Physical requirements such as aids and timetable room changes.
- Accommodation which meets physical access needs within the same price range as accommodation for learners without disabilities.
- Additional support for accessing university studies (such as additional library support or a study assistant).

4. Sharing of information, confidentiality and data protection

Plymouth Marjon University is committed to fostering an environment where disabled students and apprentices feel safe and supported in sharing information about their disability, health condition, or neurodivergence. The University recognises its legal and ethical responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

4.1 Sharing of information

- Learners may share a disability at any point during their application or studies.
- Sharing of a disability may be made to any member of staff; however, individuals are encouraged to contact the Disability and Inclusion Advice Service (DIAS) for specialist support and guidance.

- If students/apprentices need reasonable adjustments only and do not wish to discuss wider needs with specialist staff, they can share needs by completing the Disability Sharing Form to DIAS - <https://forms.office.com/e/uAHaBYBG0H>.
- Staff must act in accordance with this policy and the University's Student and Apprentice Disability Procedure for Staff, ensuring appropriate support is considered and implemented.

4.2 Confidentiality

- Students and apprentices have the right to request that the existence or nature of their disability be treated as confidential.
- Staff must respect confidentiality requests unless there is a legal or safeguarding obligation to share information.
- Where onward sharing is necessary to facilitate reasonable adjustments, only essential information will be provided to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

4.3 Data Protection

- All personal and sensitive data shared by students and apprentices will be processed in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
- Disability-related information will be stored securely and only accessed by authorised personnel.
- Students and apprentices will be informed of how their data will be used and their rights under data protection legislation.

5. Monitoring and Review

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group will oversee the implementation of this policy, including monitoring its effectiveness through feedback, reporting, and review of reasonable adjustment practices. This policy will be reviewed biennially or sooner if required by legislative or institutional changes.

6. Related policies

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Other relevant policies including Equality & Diversity Policy, Assistance Animals Policy, Admissions Policy & Procedures and the Complaints Policy](#)

[Student Wellbeing & Support](#) (see info on working with students under 'forms, policies and useful information').

Document Reference Grid

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