

# **Policy to Support Students, Apprentices and Doctoral Researchers with Disabilities, Long-term Health Conditions, Mental Health Concerns and Neuro Diverse Conditions**

## ***Note on language***

In UK equality law the word “disability” is used to represent a wide range of conditions which include physical disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health concerns and neuro diverse conditions. The legal definition within the Equality Act 2010 is:

*a physical or mental impairment which has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.*

Throughout this policy, “disability” will be used as an umbrella term to cover the wide range of conditions that are given protection. However, the University does recognise that this is not necessarily a term that all our students, apprentices and doctoral researchers will use personally or feel comfortable with.

For more information about this policy, please follow this link - [Disability and Specific Learning Difficulties \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#) or email: [studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk).

## **Introduction**

Brunel University London is committed to providing a culture where all students, apprentices and doctoral researchers can study, work, conduct research and socialise without encountering disadvantage or discrimination because of their disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This applies to students, apprentices and doctoral researchers. For further information on the protection of people with disabilities under the legislation, see Appendix A. In addition, the mental health and wellbeing of all our students, apprentices and doctoral researchers is considered a top priority and the University has a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy which places good mental health and wellbeing for all at the heart of our ethos. For further details, see [DPS-731 Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy A4 8pp AH V1 \(5\) \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#).

## **Scope**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- a prospective and / or current student, apprentice and / or doctoral researcher or graduate of the University will not be treated less favourably than any other, on the grounds of their disability;
- a prospective and / or current student, apprentice and / or doctoral researcher or graduate of Brunel will not be disadvantaged to fair access, equal opportunities and a positive student experience because of the actions or inactions of the University: and

- appropriate support is available throughout their journey, from application stage, through study and / or research, graduation and progression into the workplace and / or further education.

In addition, the policy aims to provide advice and support to University staff on how best to support students, apprentices and doctoral researchers who have a disability to gain the best degree outcome and university experience. Such support may relate to the student's, apprentice's or doctoral researcher's study and / or research, both on and off campus (including learning, assessment, examinations, work placements, trips and internships), health and safety, accommodation, finance, and social activities both on and off campus where activities are linked to the university community.

### **Legal Duty under the Equality Act 2010**

Disability is a protected characteristic under the equality legislation. For further detail, see Appendix A.

The University will endeavour to provide a full inclusive environment as far as possible. However, it also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments that are necessary to remove any potential disadvantage that a disabled student, apprentice or doctoral researcher may face in their education or research because of their disability. A reasonable adjustment can include but is not limited to making reasonable adjustments to physical features of premises, providing accessible learning and teaching, policies and procedures, auxiliary aids, assisted technology and services.

A reasonable adjustment aims to ensure that everyone is treated in an equitable way. It involves making a change to the way someone works, or to the way we work with them, following consultation with them and has the effect of minimising the impact of the person's impairment throughout their education so that they are able to reach their full potential.

Whilst the Equality Act does not define what is reasonable, the consideration of whether an adjustment is 'reasonable' is judged against the following:

- Whether the adjustment agreed with the student, apprentice or doctoral researcher will help in overcoming the difficulty
- The extent to which it is practical for the University to make the adjustment(s)
- The cost and availability of resources, including external assistance and finance
- The extent to which making the adjustment(s) would disrupt the University activities
- The size of the institution and its resources.

## **Brunel Commitment**

Brunel University London commits to:

- Ensuring that the University will meet its statutory obligations not to unlawfully discriminate against students, apprentices or doctoral researchers with disabilities. It is not unlawful to treat a disabled student, apprentice or doctoral researcher more favourably than a non-disabled student or doctoral researcher because of their disability.
- Providing an inclusive culture and environment which treats disabled students, apprentices or doctoral researchers fairly and does not restrict them from reaching their full potential.
- Ensuring that no student, apprentice or doctoral researcher will be denied access or progression to any stage of their studies or research including admission, registration, teaching and learning, placements or research on the grounds of their disability.
- Ensuring that no student, apprentice or doctoral researcher with a disability will be treated unfairly in relation to the awarding of scholarships, grants and other awards under the University's control or the provision of Student Support and Wellbeing, or any other Student Service.
- Ensuring that University systems, policies, processes and procedures do not disadvantage a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher with a disability such as Health and Safety, Complaints, or Disciplinary procedures, Academic Appeals, Extraordinary Support for Study, Fitness to Practice.
- Ensuring that students, apprentices or doctoral researchers with a disability can access any benefit, facility or service provided by the University including learning environments, accommodation, IT platforms, sporting and fitness opportunities, and social spaces, and making improvements where necessary.
- Ensuring that the University's curriculum design and delivery, readings lists, teaching content, feedback and assessment mechanisms are inclusive and accessible.
- Providing students, apprentices or doctoral researchers with a disability with positive and appropriate support to meet their needs and, as far as possible, to make any required reasonable adjustments in a timely fashion.
- Disseminating this policy throughout the University community.
- Providing information, training and advice to the university community about different types of disability and how to provide appropriate support to students, apprentices and doctoral researchers with a disability.
- Ensuring that the Student Equality & Diversity Manager conducts an annual review of the disability data such as disclosure, outcome data and complaints data to identify any trends which need to be addressed and / or lessons learnt.
- Ensuring that equality impact assessments are conducted in new policy or reviews of existing policy or operational activity where appropriate to identify where students, apprentices or doctoral researchers with disabilities may be

potentially disproportionately disadvantaged and what action may be required to mitigate.

## **Responsibilities of Disabled Students, Apprentices and Doctoral Researchers**

Brunel students, apprentices and doctoral researchers with a disability are strongly encouraged to:

- Find out what support, advice and guidance is available at the University to support them with any needs they have arising from their disability.
- Inform the university about their disability as early as possible and provide all necessary documentation in a timely way to ensure appropriate support can be put in place as soon as possible.
- Communicate with their Personal Tutor / Supervisor and / or Student Wellbeing early on if they are experiencing any difficulties, changes in their condition and / or treatment that is going to impact their learning such as attendance, assessments or examinations.
- Take a patient and pragmatic approach particularly when any support plan is being developed and any interventions put in place.

## **Reporting and confidentiality**

No student or doctoral researcher is under an obligation to inform the University about any disability, long-term health condition, mental health concern and / or neuro diverse condition. However, they are encouraged to advise the University as soon as they enrol or develop a condition, to ensure that the most appropriate support and advice is made available to them. This can be done either via their Personal Tutor, Supervisory Team and / or the Student Support and Welfare Team at the Student Centre who will arrange an appointment with a specialist advisor. The University will handle information sensitively and will only share where appropriate and necessary.

## **Getting support for a disability**

Students, apprentices and doctoral researchers are encouraged to seek support as soon as possible, either on arrival at the University or when a disability develops. They should contact their Personal Tutor / Supervisory Team and / or the Student Support and Welfare Team, in the Student Centre who can be contacted via telephone 01895 267045 or email [studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk). They will make referrals to the Student Wellbeing Team.

### *Support Plan*

Student Wellbeing will assess students', apprentices' and doctoral researchers' needs and develop a support plan which is known as a Support Profile which is intended to help identify and coordinate support, to ensure that (where possible) needs are met and reasonable adjustments put in place. Students, apprentices and doctoral researchers may be required to provide evidence of disability and how it impacts their lives. The Support Profile will be drawn up in writing and will be agreed with students, apprentices and doctoral researchers collaboratively before being shared with their academic department and other relevant staff at the University.

Once agreed, a copy will be stored on e-Vision. The students', apprentices' or doctoral researchers' academic staff, Personal Tutor and Taught Programmes Office should review the Support Profile and put in place any reasonable adjustments recommended for them. The Support Profile can be adjusted and reviewed as often as is needed but the Student Wellbeing team will be guided by the students, apprentices or doctoral researchers to do so depending on whether there are any significant changes in their disability which might impact on their learning. The students, apprentices and doctoral researchers are responsible to reach out to the Student Wellbeing team to adjust this as needed.

### *Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)*

UK students and postgraduates may be eligible for funded support through their respective funding body. For example, if funded by Student Finance England, they may access the Disabled Students' Allowance. Postgraduates who are funded by the Research Council may also be eligible for an allowance. This pays for additional support recommended in a Needs Assessment, e.g. specialist equipment, travel costs, 1 to 1 study skills or mentoring. Students, apprentices and doctoral researchers are advised to make an appointment at the Student Centre with the Student Support and Welfare Team to see a specialist advisor (see contact details above) for more information about DSA funding and how to apply.

### *Adjustments*

If students, apprentices or doctoral researchers need additional support with their learning either near to assessment deadlines, when conducting research or during the examination period, they are encouraged to speak to their Personal Tutor, Supervisory Team or make an appointment\* at Student Centre to see an advisor from Student Wellbeing who can discuss arrangements or adjustments. (\*Student Centre or [Brunel Help](#)). For more information see - [Exams \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#). All adjustments should be sought at least 3 weeks in advance of the examination period otherwise the adjustment cannot be guaranteed.

Students, apprentices or doctoral researchers may also need to seek medical advice. If a doctor advises against attempting to meet any particular assessment deadline or sitting an examination, an alternative timing and method of assessment will be explored, where possible, as long as all learning outcomes of the module are still met. Other options such as extensions to submission deadlines, deferrals of examinations, or abeyance may also be explored (see below). Any additional appropriate arrangements can be added to the Student Support Profile.

### *Coursework Extensions / Extenuating Circumstances*

If students, apprentices or doctoral researchers experience an unexpected or a sudden deterioration related to a disability during an examination, or when undertaking assessed work, or need more time to complete a piece of work, they may request a coursework extension or make a claim for extenuating circumstances. This will be considered under the University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy. For more information, see [Extenuating circumstances \(ECs\) \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#). Please note there are strict time limits around submitting ECs.

## *Abeyance*

In very rare situations students, apprentices or doctoral researchers may feel they need to take some time off away from studies at the University. This is called abeyance. The Student Centre can provide information about taking a period of disability-related abeyance and the process involved. For more information on taking a leave of absence, see [Making changes to your course \(brunel.ac.uk\)](https://www.brunel.ac.uk/making-changes-to-your-course). Personal tutors, departmental undergraduate director and / or supervisors (as per local arrangements) can provide academic advice about the implications of taking extended leave and must formally approve any request. Support for doctoral researchers can also be provided from the Graduate School or the Postgraduate Research Office. Permission must be sought from the University's Education Committee in the event of periods of abeyance exceeding one calendar year.

## *Professional programmes / Work Placements / Study Abroad*

Before students, researchers or doctoral researchers with disabilities start a work placement, they should inform their department, division or the Professional Development Centre as appropriate as soon as appropriate so arrangements can be made with a Placement Provider. For further information, see [EDI Student Work Placement Policy 2021 \(brunel.ac.uk\)](https://www.brunel.ac.uk/edi-student-work-placement-policy-2021).

Professional programmes may have specific requirements such as minimum attendance or a work placement; therefore, students enrolled on such programmes are advised to consult with their department and placement provider at the earliest opportunity.

If students, apprentices or doctoral researchers with a disability are currently studying abroad, they should liaise with their Department or the Student Wellbeing Team regarding any additional arrangements required to be made to their Support Profile.

## *Getting emotional support*

Living with a disability can sometimes be difficult, lonely and / or distressing. If students, apprentices or doctoral researchers find that their disability is affecting their mental health or wellbeing they are encouraged to seek support from our Student Wellbeing Team and book an appointment with an advisor at the Student Centre via the Student Support and Welfare Team – phone 01895 267045 or email [studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@brunel.ac.uk).

Students, apprentices and doctoral researchers can also get advice and support from a number of external agencies – see details in Appendix B.

## *Timescales*

Once students, apprentices or doctoral researchers have disclosed a disability, the Student Wellbeing Team will be in touch within 3 days and an appointment will be made with a specialist adviser within 15 working days. Once an appointment with an advisor has taken place, support will be implemented within two weeks.

For general support and advice regarding supporting students, apprentices and doctoral researchers with disabilities, staff should contact the Disability and Dyslexia Service Manager or the Student Equality and Diversity Manager.

### **Supporting a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher who has a disability**

The University recognises that disclosing a disability may be hard and stressful but students, apprentices and doctoral researchers are encouraged to do so to ensure that the University is able to put the right support in place.

Should a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher disclose a disability to a member of staff at the University, they should be reassured that the University does not discriminate against anyone disabled and that there is a wide range of support available to enable them to continue with their studies. The student, apprentice or doctoral researcher should be encouraged to seek support from their Department or the Student Wellbeing Team who will make an appointment with an advisor, refer them to a relevant service and signpost them to this policy which also details how to access support, advice and guidance. Where a staff member meets with a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher, the staff member should make a written record detailing what was discussed, any advice given and any follow up required. A copy of the written record should be emailed to the student, apprentice or doctoral researcher with a copy of the e-mail added to the Student Support Profile on eVision. Where appropriate, the staff member may consider it necessary to inform other relevant colleagues that the student, apprentice or doctoral researcher has disclosed a disability. Further information is provided in the flowchart in appendix C.

### **Confidentiality and Information Sharing**

Once a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher has advised a member of staff that they have a disability, the University has a legal duty to anticipate their needs (see legal section above and Appendix A on Equality Duty).

If a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher discloses confidential information regarding their disability such as treatment details, prognosis with a member of staff, there may be circumstances when this information may need to be passed on if there is a risk or danger to themselves or others concerned so that the appropriate action can be taken.

### **Protection from bullying and harassment**

The University does not tolerate bullying or harassment and expects the whole community to behave in an inclusive way and treat others with respect and dignity. Incidents of bullying and harassment related to someone's disability could be treated as a serious disciplinary offence and dealt with under Senate Regulation 6 and the Student Disciplinary Procedure. For more information, see [Senate Regulation 6](#) and [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#). Guidance on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is set out in the Student Code of Conduct, see [Student Code of Conduct July 2021 \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#). A video about the Student Code of Conduct is available here on the student intranet: [Student Code of Conduct: Read it, Know it, Do it. \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#).

## **Training**

General awareness and understanding of disability is mandatory for all University staff. All new staff are required to attend an introduction to an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion workshop with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partner for Staff and there is also an online module for existing staff. For more information, see – [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(brunel.ac.uk\)](#). If a member of staff is teaching or working with a student, apprentice or doctoral researcher who has a disability with which they are less familiar, it is their responsibility to become more informed. They can do this by seeking advice from advisors in the Student Wellbeing team ([wellbeing@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:wellbeing@brunel.ac.uk)) or checking online information (see specialist agencies in Appendix B). The Wellbeing Team run regular workshops on supporting students, apprentices and doctoral researchers with disabilities. In addition, the University's Organisational Development team may from time to time provide a workshop on a particular disability. Academic staff are also encouraged to attend a training session on their responsibilities under the Equality Act to make their teaching and learning accessible and inclusive, on how to make reasonable adjustments and on how to provide students and doctoral researchers with disabilities ongoing support.

## **Data recording**

All disabilities which are disclosed should be recorded along with any support put in place. Any information on a disability that is disclosed to a department or a college should be shared to Student Wellbeing who have a Disability and Dyslexia Team and a Mental Health and Counselling Team. This data will be reviewed by Student Services annually and any trends monitored and addressed.

## **Complaints**

Concerns about the University's compliance with this policy may be raised under the Students' Complaints Procedure. For more information see - [www.brunel.ac.uk/life/supporting-you/student-complaints-conduct-and-appeals](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/life/supporting-you/student-complaints-conduct-and-appeals). Guidance notes are available which provide further information about raising a complaint. The Complaints Procedure cannot be used to make an academic appeal against a decision of a Board of Examiners for which reference should be made to Senate Regulation 12 and Academic Appeals [www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/governance-and-university-committees/senate-regulations](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/governance-and-university-committees/senate-regulations).



## Appendix A

### Equality Legislation

Individuals with disabilities are protected by the Equality Act 2010. The University is required to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. They can be visible or invisible, fluctuating and / or progressive. It covers a wide range of conditions including physical and mobility impairments, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, medical conditions, sensory impairments and autistic spectrum conditions. Chronic illnesses such as HIV, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain and cancer are deemed as disability from the point of diagnoses under legislation.

'Substantial' is defined by the impact of the condition is more than minor or trivial – e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task.

'Long-term' means it must be likely to last or reoccur over a period of 12 months or more.

## Appendix B

### External support agencies who provide help and support

The list below provides details of key health charities. It is correct at the time of review (November 2022). Check websites for up-to-date contact information. Please note that Brunel University London does not endorse or take responsibility for the information provided by external organisations. It should be noted that the list is not exhaustive for all agencies that provide support so it is recommended that if a disability is not included, further information and / or for details of support groups available should be sought from a health care practitioner

#### External Services

**Equality and Human Rights Commission** is the statutory body responsible for protecting, enforcing and promoting equality across the nine protected characteristics — age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation — [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

#### Specialist health / disability agencies

**British Heart Foundation** offers advice to those with heart conditions via their website, information booklets or heart helpline. It also provides information to help people reduce their own heart health risk, funds cardiovascular research and life-saving skills and equipment, campaigns for minimising the risk of developing heart and circulatory disease. For more information see - [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk).

**Diabetes UK** provides support for everyone affected by diabetes, seeks to prevent Type 2 diabetes, campaigns and funds research that will one day lead to a cure. For more information see - [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk).

**Epilepsy Action** offers information, advice and support for people with epilepsy. It provides freephone and email helplines and a wide range of information booklets. It has around 100 local support groups across England, Wales and Northern Ireland and a network of volunteers working in the community. For more information see - [www.epilepsy.org.uk/](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk/).

**Leonard Cheshire Disability** is a major health and welfare charity which encourage and move disabled individuals toward independent living, with the freedom to live life their way. They support disabled people through local care services including supported living, domiciliary support, respite care, and employment and skills support. It also campaigns on issues affecting disabled people. For more information see - [www.leonardcheshire.org](http://www.leonardcheshire.org).

**MS Society** is a UK charity that funds world-leading research into multiple sclerosis, campaigns for people's rights and shares up to date information. For more information, see, [MS Society UK | Information, research and support | Multiple Sclerosis Society UK](http://MS Society UK | Information, research and support | Multiple Sclerosis Society UK).

**Macmillan Cancer Support** provides specialist health care, information and financial support to people affected by cancer. They also look at the social, emotional and practical impact cancer can have, and campaigns for better cancer care. For more information call: 0808 808 00 00.

**Mencap** works to provide help and support to people with a learning disability and their families and carers. They fight for equal rights, campaign for greater opportunities and challenge attitudes and prejudice. For more information see - [www.mencap.org.uk/](http://www.mencap.org.uk/).

**Mind** offers information and advice to people with mental health problems and lobbies government and local authorities on their behalf. They also work to raise public awareness and understanding of issues relating to mental health. For more information see - [www.mind.org.uk/](http://www.mind.org.uk/).

**The National Autistic Society** provides advice and support for people with autism aiming to improve the lives of autistic people. They provide a Helpline, a range of products for professionals working with autistics and a campaigning function. For more information, contact - [www.autism.org.uk/](http://www.autism.org.uk/).

**Pain UK** is an alliance of charities that supports people who live with pain who work to improve their quality of life, free from or in control of, the ongoing effects of pain, For more information, see [Pain UK](#).

**RNIB** offers help and support for blind and partially sighted people including practical and emotional support, campaigning for change, reading services and the products available in their online shop. For support and advice contact - [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk).

**RNID** supports people across the UK to manage their deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss. They provide information and community-based care and support services, develop technology and treatments, and campaign for equality. For more information, see - [RNID - National hearing loss charity](#).

**Scope** provides direct services for people with disabilities and campaigns to challenge and change negative attitudes about disability. For more information see - [www.scope.org.uk/](http://www.scope.org.uk/).

**Terrence Higgins Trust** is a voluntary sector organisation which provides HIV and sexual health services in local centre across the UK. For further details, see [Home | Terrence Higgins Trust \(tht.org.uk\)](#)

**Turning Point** is a health and social care organisation that provides support and advice across a range of issues including mental health, learning disability and primary care. For further detail see - [www.turning-point.co.uk/](http://www.turning-point.co.uk/).

## Appendix C - Flowchart to support students with disabilities

This flowchart illustrates the steps of the procedure and information provided in this policy.

