



## Student Services

### Disabled Student Policy

**Issued by the Quality Transformation Unit**  
**Approved by Senate:** n/a

Technical updates of this document take place on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University of Greater Manchester's organisational and management structure and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations.

Date: December 2025  
Version Number: 3  
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## **Introduction**

The University of Greater Manchester is fully committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion. This policy describes the University of Greater Manchester's approach for supporting disabled students including those with a diagnosed mental health condition.

The University of Greater Manchester is committed to taking positive steps to eliminate discrimination in its policies, practices and procedures by creating an inclusive environment for all students promoting positive wellbeing and mental health.

The University of Greater Manchester aims to create an environment where students feel at ease to disclose disabilities and long-standing illnesses. The University respects people's rights to privacy and will treat all information concerning an individual's disabilities or long-standing illness with appropriate confidentiality, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the University's Disability Service Confidentiality Policy.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises, consolidates and replaces previous equality legislation (including the Disability Discrimination Act), with respect to the nine protected characteristics, including disability. The act sets out the types of discrimination, discrimination rising from disability, harassment, victimisation and/or failing to make a reasonable adjustment.

## **Definitions**

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes:

- are D/deaf or hearing impaired
- are blind or visually impaired
- have a physical disability, and/or mobility difficulties
- have a specific learning difficulty (e.g., dyslexia or dyspraxia)
- have a neurodevelopmental condition (e.g., AD(H)D, Autism)
- have a neurological condition (e.g., Multiple Sclerosis, epilepsy, Tourette Syndrome, stammer)
- have a long-term mental health condition (e.g., depression, an eating disorder, schizophrenia)
- have a long-term medical condition (e.g., chronic fatigue syndrome, asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV)
- have a developmental condition not listed above which affects motor, cognitive, social, and emotional skills, and speech and language (e.g., some people with cerebral palsy or spina bifida)
- Has multiple impairments i.e., a combination of those listed above.

It is also important to note that:

- Any terminal condition is included in this definition, regardless of time frames involved;
- Progressive conditions are covered from the point of diagnosis, regardless of symptoms;



- Conditions that are intermittent, or which fluctuate over time, will always entitle the person to protection under the Act, even if the condition is in remission at a particular point in time.

Long term means it has lasted for at least 12 months, or it is likely to last at least 12 months, or it is likely to last for the rest of a person's life.

Reasonable adjustment is defined as a decision taken by the University to allow students non-standard arrangements in relation to their experiences at the University of Greater Manchester.

The Equality Act requires the University of Greater Manchester to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled students in relation to:

- a provision, criterion, or practice (for example, teaching practices, assessment methods and standard processes);
- physical features (for example, access to teaching spaces, laboratories, and libraries)
- auxiliary aids, including auxiliary services (for example, hearing loop systems, providing information in accessible formats, and the provision of professional support workers)

A 'reasonable adjustment' is defined within the Equality act. It is an adjustment that prevents substantial disadvantage, including:

- The time and effort expended by a disabled student;
- The inconvenience, indignity or discomfort suffered;
- The loss of opportunity or diminished progress experienced.

What is considered reasonable is decided by law, not by individual academics, programmes, schools or faculties. There are two key tests of reasonableness that should be considered:

- Is the adjustment effective in achieving its aim (will it work);
- Is the adjustment practicable in its application (is it possible);

HEIs can take the following into account when considering reasonableness:

- Health and safety
- The effect on other students
- The availability of resources
- The financial cost to the institution (considering the total income of the University)

These factors will not usually prevent the application of a reasonable adjustment to assessment.

Anticipatory duties under the Equality Act are considered adjustments that are made through the whole institution changes.

Anticipatory duty means that, when creating policies or making decisions that impact educational provision and/or wider services, the University has to consider what barriers disabled students may face that could affect them accessing services on an equal basis, and put in place reasonable adjustments (e.g., by designing out barriers) from the outset without waiting for an individual disability declaration or request.

The anticipatory part of the act means making universal changes that affect all students, not a single student, for example by implementing inclusive teaching and assessment practices, is an effective way of ensuring that disabled students are protected (especially as



some disabled students do not declare their disability). Another good example would be when designing buildings looking at how accessible the buildings are to ensure they accommodate different disabilities.

Making anticipatory adjustments that apply to an entire cohort can also be more time efficient than having to make individualised adjustments for particular students. For context, circa 15% of the University of Greater Manchester student population has disclosed a disability. For this reason, the university designs policies, procedures or academic content/curriculum taking in to account that a percentage of students accessing them will have a disability.

Anticipatory duties are not designed to negate the needs for considering individual reasonable adjustments for students who do declare and for whom individual reasonable adjustments may be required.

## **Principles of the Disabled Student Policy**

The University of Greater Manchester acknowledges that the disadvantage and exclusion faced by many disabled people is not an inevitable result of an impairment or health condition but can arise from environmental, social and attitudinal barriers and potential institutional practices.

We will:

- Aim not to discriminate against disabled students by subjecting them to less favourable treatment;
- As far as possible we will implement reasonable adjustments, changes to practices or environments to remove factors and barriers to participation;
- Endeavour to be anticipatory in making reasonable adjustments through taking proportionate and proactive steps to allow disabled students to engage with university activities;
- Promote a culture of positive attitude towards a disability and endeavour to increase staff knowledge;
- Promote a culture where applicants and students feel safe to make a disclosure as greater disclosures help the university improve support for disabled students;
- Review our services and consult with students where possible on service delivery and changes.

## **Scope**

This policy applies to current students as well as former students where there is a continuing relationship i.e., students holding an award conferred by the University and continuing to access facilities such as Careers or the Library.

It also applies to applicants whom are holding an offer of a place to study.

The policy applies to all students irrespective of their programme of study or level of study.

Students registered with partner institutions or those applying to partner institutions will be subject to separate policies and procedures, and these partners will typically adhere to local equality laws in their country if outside of the UK.



## Declaring a Disability

If an individual wants to declare a disability they are encouraged to do so at the point of application, they can also do so at the point of enrolling. Disclosures that are made earlier in the admissions process allow the university greater time to consider reasonable adjustments.

The University welcomes enquiries and applications from prospective students who have a disability including those who have a history or mental health difficulties. All applicants will be assessed on their academic merits, with no discrimination on the grounds of their disability.

Students who are enrolled can make a disclosure or update the University of any new disclosure throughout their studies through contacting the Disability Service, Student Services.

The law stipulates that once a student has shared information about their disability to one part of the University, they are deemed to have shared this information to all parts of the University. This means that the University, and individual staff members, are legally required to act on any disclosure of disability information.

Disclosures made to staff who are not in the Disability Service should be recorded on a disclosure form (See Appendix One).

Staff must be sensitive of the language they use. Using medical conditions as insults or jokes promotes a climate in which disabled people are stigmatised and do not feel comfortable to disclose their difficulties or seek the advice and help, they need. Examples of negative stereotypical language include expressions or phrases that minimise or trivialise disabilities and their impact, blame people for disabilities, associates certain disabilities with violence, or using medical conditions or terms in a hyperbolic way.

## Process for the consideration of reasonable adjustments

Following declaration of a disability, the Disability Service will request further information from the individual including, as a minimum, relevant medical evidence. Other additional information will be requested to inform the assessment of reasonable adjustments, this could include where appropriate, Disabled Students Study Needs Assessment Reports or information obtained through consultation with the individual.

Where the Disability Service recognises that a student may have additional or enhanced individual needs, this will be reviewed between the Disability Service and the individual, on occasions academic staff, staff from the placement provider or employer (Apprentices) will also contribute to these conversations and decision making.

Reasonable adjustments made for placements or in employment will be made by the placement provider or employer, information will be shared between the university and the placement/provider as necessary but only when the student has consented for their information to be shared in this way.

A Disability Advisor or Mental Health Advisor or a member of their associated teams will discuss with the student how their disability may impact on their studies and engagement with the University.



All of the information obtained through this process will be used to draft an Individual Learning Support Plan of individual requirements or study plan, the purpose of which is to inform wider staff within the University, where consent has been given, on what reasonable adjustments should be made. The student will be given a copy of the Individual Learning Support Plan and afforded a period of time to review this before it is disseminated.

Responsibility for implementation of any reasonable adjustments lies with teaching and learning related staff.

Students with a disability who are in receipt of an Individual Learning Support Plan are required to inform the Disability Service if they are not satisfied with how these adjustments are being implemented, they can do this through making an appointment with their Disability Advisor. The Disability Advisor will endeavour to work with the relevant academic department to overcome any challenges.

If a student disagrees with the content of an Individual Learning Support Plan, they can request a review of this, such reviews will be done by either the Disability Service Team Leader or Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager. These staff will endeavour to overcome any challenges.

Disabled students should familiarise themselves with the Arrangements for Notifying Schools of Reasonable Adjustments required for Disabled Students and Procedure for Individual Examination Arrangements, available from here: <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/services-for-disabled-students/disability-policies>

## **Examinations and Timed Assessments**

Where students would be disadvantaged by a particular form of assessment, reasonable adjustments to the assessment method or alternative assessment methods may be required. In these instances, both reasonable adjustments and alternative assessment methods will be made with due consideration given to core competency standards, learning outcomes or any relevant professional body requirements.

Once the arrangements are agreed, and a consent form has been completed indicating information can be shared with University Staff on a need-to-know basis, the advisor will update the student's records so that exam team can see what adjustments are required. The exam team will email disabled students prior to their exam to confirm the exam adjustments that are being put in place and will advise them to contact the Disability Service if they do not meet their needs. If disabled students do not receive this, the students should check with their academic department that their exam adjustments are in place. The exam team will liaise with the academic department to let them know what adjustments are needed on the exam date. For some courses such as nursing, the Academic Department will take responsibility for formal examinations and will use Individual Learning Support Plan to check reasonable adjustments and implement them.

## **Peer Reviews/Panel Requests**

The University of Greater Manchester recognises that there will be times when students aren't eligible for external funding such as Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) but still may have



disability related costs associated with their studies and reasonable adjustments. This could include (non-exhaustive) students who are repeating a period of study and who are enrolled as Dormant for Assessment, International Students or Apprentices. Students will be required to give explicit consent for the purpose of seeking a peer review or panel decision. More information on Peer Reviews/Panel Requests is available upon request from the Disability Service.

To support in these situations the University will ensure a panel of staff consider the needs of a student and the process of implementing reasonable adjustments. The panel will decide on how to utilise university funding in making reasonable adjustments. This might include (non-exhaustive) the provision of support workers, mentors or equipment. For a panel to decide on appropriate support members of the panel will be provided with information on a student's disability and how it impacts on the students' ability to engage with their studies.

For more complex cases/higher costing support, the request will be sent to Panel Members; for less complex/lower costing support the request will be sent to Peer Reviewers.

| Panel Members                               | Peer Reviewers                 |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Head of Student Services                    | Disability Service Team Leader |
| Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager | Senior Wellbeing Coordinator   |
| Students' Union General Manager             | Disability Advisors            |
| Disability Service Team Leader              | Mental Health Advisors         |
| Senior Wellbeing Coordinator                |                                |

If a request is rejected by Peer Reviewers, it will automatically escalate to Panel Members who will review the decision of the Peer Reviewers. The Panel Members include representation from multiple services, including the Students' Union, who are the voice of the student body.

Students who are unhappy with the decision of a Panel can appeal against the decision by writing to [disabilityinfo@greatermanchester.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityinfo@greatermanchester.ac.uk) within 14 days of the original decision being communicated. The Student Mental Health Manager will then respond to any appeal.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Staff**

Staff should be ready to offer support to students within the professional limitation of their role but are not expected to assume responsibility outside the parameters of their professional role

Academic staff and those with relevant professional support roles will be well informed about appropriate University services for students with a disability. This will include providing new staff with relevant information at their central induction.



Staff must be sensitive to the use of the language with regards disabilities including mental health. Negative stereotypical language promotes a climate in which people with disabilities are stigmatised.

The Head of Student Services or the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager can make minor changes to this policy as required. Major changes will need approval of Head of Quality Transformation Unit.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Students**

Students need to take responsibility for communicating their needs and accessing services support within the University to enable the University to offer support.

Students are encouraged to take care of their own health, for example ensuring that they get adequate rest, take prescribed medication and access appropriate support.

Students have the right to disclose a disability or to request that the existence or nature of their disability be treated as strictly confidential and therefore not shared with relevant staff across the University. Requests for strict confidentiality may mean that a less satisfactory adjustment is provided or that no adjustments can be made.

Where a disability impacts upon professional fitness to study, students are personally responsible for disclosing relevant information about their disability/disabilities or medical condition(s) and adjustments to their professional body in line with their professional registration requirements.

Students are responsible for requesting any reviews of their implemented reasonable adjustments and or exam arrangements if such adjustments are not proving to be effective.

Students are required to engage with the appropriate staff in a timely manner be this within the Life Lounge (Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Service) or the Disability Service. The University cannot support students who don't engage, are discharged because of non-engagement or who have sporadic engagement.

Students are required to provide the necessary information and evidence to the satisfaction of the University for reasonable adjustments to be made and support provided. Students who are experiencing difficulties with obtaining evidence should take responsibility for speaking with a Disability Advisor about this.

The University cannot be held liable for delays outside of its control and cannot implement support or reasonable adjustments retrospectively (i.e., prior to a disclosure or in the absence of satisfactory evidence to support a disclosure).

Students should be aware that any behaviour which impacts negatively on fellow students or staff, or is in any way disruptive or offensive, is not acceptable within the University community and may be subject to University Student Disciplinary Procedure.



## Fitness to Practice

There may be incidents/concerns that require the University to implement Fitness to Practice procedures, these could be as a result of a student's disability, including when a student is experiencing a decline in their mental health and there are concerns about the ability of the student to keep themselves or others safe.

## Health, Wellbeing and Supported Study

The University recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression and wider university experience. The University aims to maintain an empowering environment which is safe and conducive to the wellbeing of all. The University aims to enable all students to have opportunities to fully engage with all aspects of their student life, removing barriers as necessary, so that all students can achieve their maximum potential.

The Health, Wellbeing and Supported Study Policy and Procedure may be implemented for disabled students who are experiencing health or wellbeing difficulties that are impacting on their potential to achieve.

The aim of the procedure is to support students to remain on their programme of study wherever possible. However, it is acknowledged that there may be occasions where all options have been exhausted, and the student is not well enough to continue their studies, in which case interruption or withdrawal from studies may be deemed to be the best outcome.

For more information see the Health, Wellbeing and Supported Policy and Procedure.

## Mitigating Circumstances

If a disabled student is unable to complete a piece of work or feels that their performance in a piece of work or examination has been adversely affected by their disability, for which reasonable adjustments have been made, they remain entitled to submit mitigating circumstances.

Students who apply for mitigating circumstances citing a long-standing illness or disability but have not previously disclosed a disability or long-standing illness, should obtain medical evidence from their GP or a relevant medical professional, this should include details of how the disability or illness has impacted on your ability to study.

## Interruption of Study

The University will respond flexibly to any request to suspend studies on the grounds of a disability; it is usually possible for a student to request to suspend their course of study to enable a period of recovery. An appropriate period of recovery should be negotiated between the student and their academic staff. The University has the right to request the student obtain medical evidence to support such a request. The University also has the right to request medical evidence prior to the student returning to their course of study, this is to ensure the student is fit and able to engage with the academic demands that will be placed



upon them. Such requests for an interruption of study and or return to study can be better managed if the Health, Wellbeing and Supported Study Policy and Procedure is invoked.

It is important that the student requesting a break in their studies explores the financial impact of this. Students can obtain advice from the Student Funding Advisor, Student Services.

## **Policies and Further Information**

This policy and procedure are available via the University of Greater Manchester Policy Zone and Disability Service webpages.

This Policy and Procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- Health, Wellbeing and Supported Study Policy and Procedure
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures
- Student Suspension Policy
- Student Admissions Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Faculty Of Health and Wellbeing Student Occupational Health Assessment
- Individual Exam Arrangements for Disabled Students
- Dignity at Study Policy and Procedure
- Student Complaints Procedure

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

The University is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to the protected characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.



## Helpful Contacts & Resources

| Support Area       | Contact or Link   |
|--------------------|---|
| Disability Service | <a href="mailto:disabilityinfo@greatermanchester.ac.uk">disabilityinfo@greatermanchester.ac.uk</a><br>01204903478 |
| Life Lounge        | <a href="mailto:lifelounge@greatermanchester.ac.uk">lifelounge@greatermanchester.ac.uk</a><br>01204903566         |
| Dignity at Study   | <a href="mailto:dignityatstudy@greatermanchester.ac.uk">dignityatstudy@greatermanchester.ac.uk</a>                |

### Summary – Disabled Student Policy

Reference Number: QTU /

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|----------------------|--|
| Version number       | 3  |
| Version Date         | 04/08/2025   |
| Author               | Matt Dillon  |
| Owner                | Student Services: Talin Aghanian<br>QTU: Jo Hornby   |
| Responsible person   | Talin Aghanian   |
| Approving Committee  | /  |
| Date Approved        | 12/06/2025   |
| Effective From       | 01/09/2025   |
| Dissemination Method | University webpage   |
| Review Frequency     | Annually   |
| Consultation History | Consultation with the Students' Union, Quality Transformation Unit, and Student Services was undertaken in June/July 2025. |
| Document History     | This policy has been drafted in the absence of a Disabled Student Policy and to replace the Student Mental Health Policy.  |