

# Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise

## Disability and Employability Toolkit

An information and guidance resource for disabled students and support staff

V.10 Document updated June 2025

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this toolkit is accurate and reliable as of the date of publication; however, Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise cannot assume any liability for the accuracy and completeness of this information.

## Introduction

This toolkit is designed as an information and guidance resource for students with a disability who want to know more about how to best manage issues in relation to their disability when looking for work and in employment.

It is also designed for University of Southampton staff that are supporting disabled students in employability related areas. All sections aim to be equally relevant to these two audiences.

The toolkit is designed to cover what a student with a disability needs to know about disability throughout the employment process, from application to being in the job, and the focus of the five sections is as follows:

1. To provide an overview of disability law and knowing your rights as an applicant and employee.
2. To consider the benefits of sharing information about a disability and the different opportunities to do this, from application to being in work.
3. To give advice on the 'reasonable adjustments' that should be put in place to ensure that you do not face disadvantage as a disabled person when looking for a job or in the workplace.
4. To highlight the support and resources available to disabled students throughout the recruitment process and in work.
5. To explore the ways that disabled students can positively promote their disability and what it has taught them to a prospective employer.

This toolkit can be read cover-to-cover, but sections can also be read in isolation depending on the particular interests and need of the reader.

# Toolkit Contents

<b>1. The Equality Act 2010</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 What does the Act cover? .....	5
1.2 Prohibited Conduct – what is ‘unlawful’ under the Act? .....	6
1.2.1 Direct Discrimination .....	6
1.2.2 Indirect Discrimination .....	7
1.2.3 Discrimination by Association .....	7
1.2.4 Discrimination by Perception .....	7
1.2.5 Harassment .....	8
1.2.6 Victimisation .....	8
1.2.7 Discrimination arising from disability .....	8
1.3 Public Sector Equality Duties .....	9
1.4 The legal definition of disability .....	10
1.5 Medical Model to Social Model of disability .....	12
1.6 Protection of disabled people in recruitment and employment .....	13
1.7 Further information and guidance on the law .....	13
<b>2. Sharing information about a disability</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 What does this mean? .....	14
2.2 What do people need to know about a disability? .....	14
2.3 Why share information about a disability? .....	14
2.4 Why not to share information about a disability .....	16
2.5 When to share information about a disability (including Equality Monitoring Forms) .....	16
2.5.1 Sharing information about a disability during the application stage .....	16
2.5.2 Discussing a disability prior to an interview .....	18
2.5.3 Discussing a disability at interview or on offer of employment .....	18
2.5.4 Sharing information about a disability on the job .....	19
2.6 How to disclose a disability .....	19
2.7 Possible concerns about disclosing a disability .....	20
2.8 Medical questionnaires and health related questions .....	20
2.8.1 Fitness to Teach or Practice .....	21
2.8.2 Occupational Health (OH) .....	21
<b>3. Reasonable Adjustments</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 What is a reasonable adjustment for a disability? .....	23
3.2 Reasonable adjustments at application stage .....	24
3.3 Reasonable adjustments at interview stage .....	25
3.3.1 Tests and Assessment Centres .....	26
3.4 Reasonable adjustments in employment .....	26
3.5 Failure to make reasonable adjustments .....	27
<b>4. Sources of support for disabled applicants and employees</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 Organisations and schemes offering information, guidance and support .....	29

4.1.1 Support for self-employment or enterprise activities-----	35
<b>4.2 Disability positive employers.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.2.1 Recruitment Agencies -----	39
<b>4.3 Support in employment.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.4 Access to Work funding.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5. Positively promoting your disability.....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1 Why promote your disability?.....	45
<b>5.2 Presenting your disability on application forms and in CVs .....</b>	<b>45</b>
5.2.1 Disability-related gaps in CVs-----	46
<b>5.3 Discussing your disability within an interview .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.3.1 Direct questions about your disability -----	47
5.3.2 Difficult questions about your disability -----	49
<b>5.4 Skills identification .....</b>	<b>50</b>

# 1. The Equality Act 2010

## 1.1 What does the Act cover?

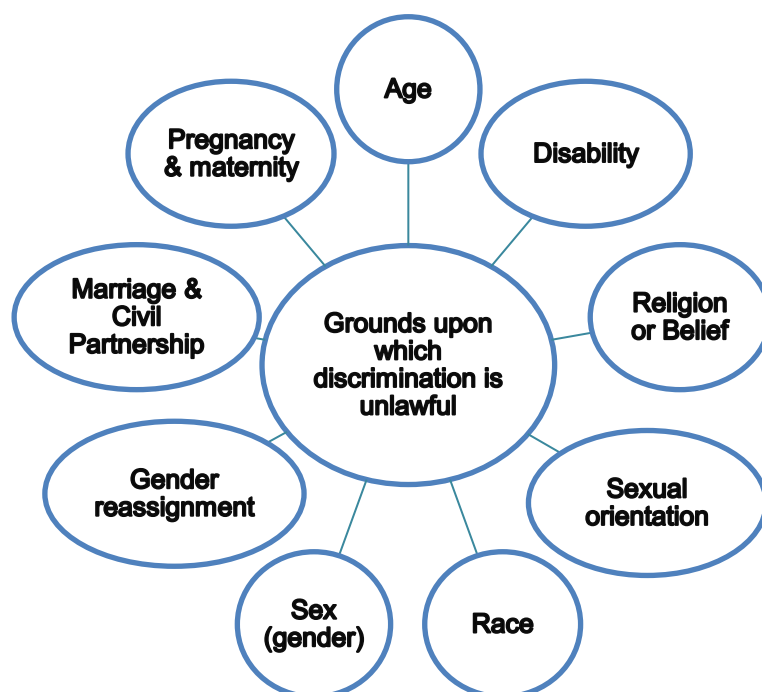
The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination in the workplace, during the application process for work and in wider society. The stated aim of the Act is to reform and harmonise discrimination law, to help Britain become a fairer society, improve public services and enhance business performance.

The Act strengthens and streamlines equality law and replaces previous anti-discrimination laws (such as the Disability Discrimination Act, the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act) with a single piece of legislation.

The Act allows employers to use 'positive action' if they want to make sure their workforce is diverse. Positive action means the steps that an employer can take to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs.

The Act sets out the different ways in which it is 'unlawful' to treat someone and identifies nine protected 'characteristics'. These characteristics are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful and all are of equal status (see Figure 1, next page).

Figure 1. The nine protected characteristics under The Equality Act 2010



## 1.2 Prohibited Conduct – what is ‘unlawful’ under the Act?

There are five key areas of unlawful discrimination under the Act, which are contained under the umbrella term of ‘prohibited conduct’. Although it is not necessary to categorise the type of prohibited conduct in order to know if you have experienced discrimination, it is useful to be aware of the range of behaviours and practices that are considered to be discriminatory under the Act, as this has broadened since previous legislation. Definitions of each of the five areas and examples are set out below.

### 1.2.1 Direct Discrimination

*Definition:* different treatment of two individuals where the reason for the difference in treatment is a protected characteristic.

*Example:* an employer does not appoint an applicant with depression as they think the job would be too stressful and they would not cope with the demands of the role.

### 1.2.2 Indirect Discrimination

**Definition:** a practice, policy or action that may at first appear neutral in its effects, but on closer examination disproportionately and adversely affects a person with a protected characteristic.

*Example:* a local authority produces an information leaflet about its services for local people. It does not produce an easy-to-read version of the leaflet in order to save money. This would make it more difficult for someone with a learning disability to access the services and could amount to indirect discrimination.

**Note:** It is possible to justify the rule, policy or practice that puts disabled people at a disadvantage. For example, there could be a health and safety reason, or an unavoidable business reason. Where this is the case, it will not count as discrimination.

### 1.2.3 Discrimination by Association

**Definition:** where a person does not have a protected characteristic himself or herself but is treated 'less favourably' because of their relationship with someone who does.

*Example:* a member of staff is refused promotion due to concerns over their ability to meet the demands of the job while caring for a disabled child.

### 1.2.4 Discrimination by Perception

**Definition:** acting or behaving in a discriminatory way towards a person due to the belief that they have a protected characteristic, whether or not they have such a characteristic.

*Example:* a member of staff treats a colleague differently due to their perception that they have depression.

### 1.2.5 Harassment

*Definition:* unwanted conduct related to a person's protected characteristic/s, which has the purpose or effect either of violating a person's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

*Example:* a work situation where someone is spreading malicious rumours about someone based on their sexual orientation.

### 1.2.6 Victimisation

*Definition:* treating a person unfavourably because they have taken (or might be taking) action under the Equality Act or supporting somebody who is doing so.

*Example:* a disabled employee is suspended following their involvement in another staff member's discrimination case.

### 1.2.7 Discrimination arising from disability

*Definition:* a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability and there is no good reason for doing this. It is also disability discrimination if someone does not make adjustments to allow disabled people to access a service or carry out a job.

*Example:* a disabled person may need to use a guide dog, but no adjustments are made to allow for this.



### 1.3 Public Sector Equality Duties

Under the Equality Act there are different levels of responsibility organisations are subject to in eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. The Public Sector Equality Duty is an additional level of responsibility that public sector organisations are subject to in demonstrating that they are integrating equality and good relations into their day-to-day business. This duty consists of a general equality duty and specific duties. Examples of Public Sector organisations include the Civil Service, Local Government, the BBC, Natural England, NHS Trusts, the Police and many Educational establishments.

Under the general duty, all public sector organisations must give due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are known as the three aims of the general duty and they involve:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Complying with the duty may involve treating some people 'more favourably' than others.

This general duty is supported by additional specific duties, which are to assist public bodies in meeting the general duty. They mainly involve the requirement to be transparent and publish information to show how the duty is being met and equality objectives are being set. For example, the University of Southampton publishes an Annual Equality and Diversity Report in which it presents data on student and staff recruitment and retention by key protected characteristics, and reports on how it is setting and meeting its objectives towards increasing participation of underrepresented groups.

Detailed knowledge of the equality duties is not necessary when you consider application and employment, but it is worth bearing in mind that public sector organisations, such as local authorities, schools, further and higher education, police and government departments are legally required to do *more* to support equality. However, this is not to say that private sector organisations are completely exempt from these responsibilities; those that are carrying out public functions are covered and are demonstrating good practice in the area of disability equality.

## **1.4 The legal definition of disability**

In order to be protected under the law, a disabled person is required to meet the legal definition of a disability. The Equality Act considers a person to have a disability:

'...if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

*Equality Act 2010 (Ch.1) Part 6*

The legal definition of disability covers both 'visible' and 'unseen' conditions, including diabetes, cancer, multiple sclerosis and heart conditions; hearing or sight impairments, or a significant mobility difficulty; mental health conditions and learning difficulties.

The law does not require the cause of the disability to be determined, or to categorise it as either mental or physical. Conditions such as MS, cancer and HIV are covered from the point of diagnosis even if they are symptomless. This recognises that people might be discriminated against based on having a certain condition, rather than due to the effects that it has on them.

Under the law disability is determined by the significant effect it has on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities. These activities are defined as involving physical mobility, co-ordination and hearing and sight, but also the ability to remember, concentrate and learn.

The term 'substantial' in the definition means that daily tasks might take longer. It also allows for them to be done differently; for example, for someone with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, actions such as turning off appliances and leaving the house are daily tasks that might involve repeatedly checking and rechecking.

'Long-term' means that the impairment has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 12 months or for the rest of the affected person's life. Effects that are not long-term would include, for example, a loss of mobility due to a broken limb, which is likely to heal within 12 months. An example of a long-term effect is cancer, even if the person who has the condition no longer has symptoms, or depression, where the effects may come and go.

Even if the effects of a condition are episodic or sporadic – if they are recurring and are likely to last beyond 12 months then they will be considered long-term. The law also protects people who have had a disability in the past if it meets the definition, even if this condition has not reoccurred (discrimination based on past disability).

Equality law now focuses on the effects of a disability on an individual and not the disability itself. This is a move from the 'medical model' to the 'social model' of disability.

## 1.5 Medical Model to Social Model of disability

These two terms are used within the disability rights field to refer to the shift in how society should view and respond to disability. You may not have come across these terms before, but it is helpful to understand this movement to the social model as it is reflected in anti-discrimination law and is what employers should be reflecting in their recruitment and employment practices.

Under the medical model the disabled person has historically been perceived as the 'problem' and as having something wrong with them which means that they are not able to do something as well as someone who does not have that disability. The social model, in contrast, views disability as something 'located' in the interaction between an individual and the environment and recognises that it is *barriers that disable people*. People with impairments are not disabled by their condition but by the physical, procedural and social barriers that they face.

The illustration below shows these 'problems' as they used to be viewed and transforms them into actions to be taken by society to address these barriers.

*Disabled person as the problem:*

'unable to get up steps'

'unable to see'

'in need of help and carers'

'having a mental health difficulty'



*Barriers need to be tackled through:*

well-designed buildings

assistive technology

inclusive workplaces

positive and non-discriminatory attitudes

## 1.6 Protection of disabled people in recruitment and employment

The Equality Act prohibits all employers except the armed forces from treating disabled people 'less favourably' than anyone else. The Act protects you and covers areas including:

- application forms
- interview arrangements
- aptitude or proficiency tests
- job offers
- terms of employment, including pay
- promotion, transfer and training opportunities
- dismissal or redundancy

Previously, employers could ask questions about health or disability in the initial stages of recruitment. This often resulted in unfair discrimination.

It is now illegal to ask questions about health or disability prior to job offer (Section 60 of the Equality Act). This is part of new provisions that aim to stop disabled job applicants being screened out early in the recruitment process and discouraged from applying for work because they will be asked questions about their disability on the application form.

Further information on how you are protected as a disabled applicant and employee are covered in the following sections.

## 1.7 Further information and guidance on the law

Further information about your rights as a disabled person under the Equality Act 2010 can be found on the UK government's website at: [www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance).

Advice on what to do if you feel your rights as a disabled person have been affected can be found from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) at: [www.equalityhumanrights.com/](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/).

## **2. Sharing information about a disability**

### **2.1 What does this mean?**

Simply put, disclosure is a choice you make about whether to tell another person or organisation about your disability.

The Equality Act means that applicants can decide whether or not to share information about a disability on an application for a job or in employment. Deciding to share information about your disability to an employer (or potential employer) is a matter of personal choice. You are under no legal obligation to do so unless the job involves putting you in situations where your disability could present a risk to the health and safety of you or your colleagues.

### **2.2 What do people need to know about a disability?**

An employer or potential employer does not need to know the cause of your disability, or your medical history and it is unlawful for an employer to ask a disabled applicant questions about their health or disability without you declaring, apart from for the purposes of equality monitoring (see Section 2.5.1).

The important thing to focus on is the potential *impact* your disability might have on your working life and what an employer might need to know about this impact in order to effectively support you in a job.

### **2.3 Why share information a disability?**

There are several reasons why it is positive and beneficial for you to tell an employer about your disability. The following are some key benefits of doing so.

### *Legal protection*

The Equality Act makes it unlawful for any employer to discriminate against you either during the application and selection process, or during employment. As a disabled person you will be covered under the legislation from the point of disclosure.

### *Access to workplace adjustments and support*

Knowledge of your disability allows for adjustments to be made to your job and working environment and for support to be offered if necessary. It also enables access to financial assistance to provide any additional support.

### *Benefits from employer 'positive action' on disability*

You should not assume that your disability will be perceived as a disadvantage in looking for a job or in employment. Many employers recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce and graduate recruiters are actively encouraging more applications from this pool of talent. Employers may have joined schemes to demonstrate their commitment to employing disabled people and improve their practices, for example the government Disability Confident scheme, see Section 4.2 for further information.

### *Better working relationship with your employer*

Sharing information about your disability generates trust and an open relationship with your employer. It enables you to control how your disability is explained to an employer and in stressing the positive aspects of your disability you can confront any negative perceptions at the earliest stage possible. For example, if your disability is visible you can deal with misconceptions and show how working with a disability can be 'business as usual'.

It also provides you with an opportunity to 'check out' how disability positive a potential employer is and help you assess whether or not this is the sort of organisation or company that you want to work for and will value the contribution that you can make.

## 2.4 Why not to share information about a disability

You may feel that it is not appropriate or necessary to mention your disability, particularly if you feel that it does not affect your ability to do the job. If this is the case, you are under no obligation to do so.

## 2.5 When to share information about a disability (including Equality Monitoring Forms)

If you decide that you wish to tell an employer about your disability, it is your decision when to share this information, and it may vary depending on a number of factors, including the organisation and the particular job that you are applying for.

There is no one right answer for when to share information; it is for your individual purposes, so you need to think about what the desired outcomes are for you.

There are many stages throughout the recruitment and employment process at which you may wish to share information: on your application form, at your interview, on the first day of your job, or after you have been in post for six months. The sections below set out some of the opportunities you will have to discuss your disability and ways to consider going about this.

Further support and information is also available through [EmployAbility](#). The University of Southampton is a Next Generation partner of EmployAbility, enabling students to receive additional individual and tailored support.

### 2.5.1 Sharing information about a disability during the application stage

#### *Equality monitoring forms*

A potential employer may give or send you an equality monitoring form and ask you to tell them about your protected characteristics. This information is often used by employers to help them see who has applied and been selected for a job,



in terms of their protected characteristics. This information, in turn, will be used to make changes to their recruitment practices that might help them achieve a more diverse workforce.

It is not a legal requirement for an employer to use an equality monitoring form. However, if they do use this means of gathering equality data, they must not use this information to discriminate against you. For example, they must not base decisions about who to take further into the application process on the information you provide on the monitoring form.

Monitoring forms are not a form of full disclosure and information that you provide on this form in relation to your disability should be kept separately from your main application and should not be passed to the decision-making individual or panel. However, you can disclose in full at this point if you wish to and this information can be passed on to those with responsibility for the selection process.

You will probably have come across an equality monitoring form before, but just be aware that this information can be sought in a number of ways, sometimes on a separate sheet or sometimes as a separate section on the application form. Some forms will give you the opportunity for a full disclosure, including requesting any adjustments that you require, while others will clearly state that it is for monitoring purposes only and may just have a yes/no tick box.

### *Sharing information on application*

Another way for you to share information at application stage is for you to make reference to it in your CV, covering letter or on an application form. Again, this is not a requirement, but there are some benefits to doing this (see Section 5.2 for further guidance).

If the recruitment process includes psychometric or aptitude tests, these often take place soon after submitting your application, and you may be sent a tight deadline to complete the tests. Sharing information about your disability at the application stage should make it easier to put in place any adjustments.

### 2.5.2 Discussing a disability prior to an interview

Sharing information about your disability prior to an interview, either on your CV or application form or by requesting any adjustments for interview, will enable you to start a dialogue with an employer about the impact of your disability in relation to the requirements of the job.

Telling someone about your disability-related needs prior to an interview will enable any adjustments to be made to interview, test or assessment centre arrangements. For example, if you have a mobility issue, ensuring that the interview is held in an accessible location (see Section 3.3). You should not assume that if you have not declared a disability or what your individual support needs are prior to an interview, that an employer can make provisions for these on the day.

Declaring a disability at this stage will also give you the opportunity to request information about an organisation's equal opportunities policies and support arrangements, if you have not been able to access them prior to this stage. This information can help you decide whether this is an employer that you are interested in working for and whether they will value the skills and contributions that a diverse workforce can bring.

### 2.5.3 Discussing a disability at interview or on offer of employment

Sharing information at an interview or after an offer of employment has been received may enable you to get information about adjustments and support schemes (including funding for adjustments) and consider ways in which you would benefit (see Section 4.4.1).

It will also provide you with an opportunity to present your disability confidently and give evidence of the transferable skills you have or strategies you might have developed for managing the impact of your disability.

#### 2.5.4 Sharing information about a disability when in the role

Another option is to wait until you are established in your job before deciding whether you wish to discuss your disability. You do not have to do this on day one. Who you share information with will somewhat depend on the size of the organisation; it might be your line manager or the HR department or in some larger organisations, an equality manager or representative. This will enable you to get any reasonable adjustments made that will support you to do the job and access funding available to pay for these.

If you feel comfortable doing so, once you start work, you might also want to share information with your colleagues. This can increase understanding of your needs, provide peer support and enhance teamwork. It can be helpful to think through in advance how much detail it will be useful to share with colleagues and what you will say.

### 2.6 How to share information about a disability

How you choose to tell someone about your disability and at what stage is up to you, but here are some suggestions of approaches that you might wish to take.

Think about how you might discuss your disability in terms of its relevance to the role you are applying for. You are not required to go into personal detail or discuss your medical history or the cause of your disability. Remember, the main focus of your application or interview is showing an employer about your suitability for the role, and you should try to avoid focusing too much of your application or interview on issues related to your disability.

Do not assume that an employer will have a negative attitude towards employing a person with a disability. If you make a positive statement about your disability, you will control how it is perceived. Try to emphasise achievements and give examples of skills that you may have developed as a result of your disability, such as flexibility, determination, the ability to perform under pressure and creative problem solving. You do not need to 'sell' your disability but think about how your

experiences and skills as a disabled person are selling points and may give you an edge over other candidates (see Section 5 for further guidance).

Remember that you are the person that knows about your disability best. Some interviewers have little experience of disability and may feel unsure of workplace implications. Be prepared to make suggestions about what adjustments you would need in order to do the job effectively.

## **2.7 Possible concerns about disclosing a disability**

Despite the clear benefits of disclosing a disability within the recruitment and employment process, it is understandable that you may have concerns about the possible negative impacts of doing this on your application and job. You may feel that your application will not get considered on its merits or that it may be rejected outright.

Although legislation cannot prevent discrimination from occurring, it is important to remember that an organisation would be breaking the law if they were to make a decision on your suitability for a role based on your disability.

See Section 4.2, Disability positive employers, to see how you can identify proactive organisations.

## **2.8 Medical questionnaires and health related questions**

Some roles require the completion of medical questionnaires or request information about your health. For the teaching and medical professions, this information is mandatory (see Section 2.8.1). It is important to remember that even in these instances, an employer cannot refer you as a disabled applicant to an Occupational Health (OH) practitioner or ask you to fill in a medical questionnaire *before* a job offer is made. OH is described in Section 2.8.2.

However, once an offer of employment or professional training is made, an employer is allowed to make the offer conditional upon successfully meeting the

employer's health or other requirements. The employer may also want to ask questions to determine whether a successful applicant would be eligible for job-related benefits or would require 'reasonable adjustments' to help them do their job (see Section 3.4).

Failure to complete the medical questionnaire truthfully can result in the withdrawal of a job offer or dismissal. The questions asked should relate to the requirements of the role and be designed not just to check your ability to carry out the job, but also what requirements might be needed to enable you to do it.

The Armed Forces are exempt from some areas of the legislation including the right to request information about disability or a health-related issue. They state that all recruits need to be 'fit and able'. There are numerous health conditions which would mean individuals cannot apply to work in the Army, Navy or RAF.

#### 2.8.1 Fitness to Teach or Practice

All applicants for the teaching and medical professions have to complete a declaration of health questionnaire and be assessed by an Occupational Health (OH) practitioner following acceptance. Applicants often have to pass a physical and mental fitness assessment.

If students have a disability they are required to disclose this on the fitness questionnaire. Failure to do so could lead to dismissal or removal from a course.

It is important to remember that having a disability will not bar disabled students from the profession, but it must be disclosed. If students have a disability, the OH practitioner must consider all reasonable adjustments to enable them to meet the Fitness to Teach or to Practice criteria. See Section 3.4 for information about reasonable adjustments.

#### 2.8.2 Occupational Health (OH)

Occupational Health (OH) are a team of professional doctors and nurses who aim to find out what the impact of your work is on your health, and make sure you are fit for the work you do. They have a duty to give independent informed professional guidance and advice on work and health matters.

An employer or training provider can refer you to OH if you have a health issue - including mental health issues - that could potentially affect or is affecting your work. OH referrals are intended to see what adjustments may need to be made to support you at work and make an assessment of your fitness for work.

OH services can provide direct help for workers and applicants, for example, advising on reasonable adjustments and working safely. Their role is not to put blocks in the way but to support workers and applicants.

It is important to remember that OH doctors and nurses are bound by a duty of confidentiality towards their patients. In practice, this means, for example, that a company doctor can advise the employer what changes to working patterns or practices would best meet your needs but must not reveal your medical condition, or any information relating to that condition without your consent. You may be happy to provide this consent, for example, if you have Type 1 diabetes, you may prefer that your employer and colleagues know of your condition so that they can provide appropriate support if needed.

### **3. Reasonable Adjustments**

#### **3.1 What is a reasonable adjustment for a disability?**

A reasonable adjustment is an alteration to an existing employment arrangement or the provision of additional support, to ensure that a disabled person has the same access to everything that is involved in getting and doing a job as a non-disabled person, as far as is reasonable. The overall aim of a reasonable adjustment should be to remove or reduce any disadvantage faced by a disabled employee or job applicant.

Reasonable adjustments are required to be made because equality law recognises that bringing about equality for disabled people may mean changing the way in which employment is structured, the removal of physical barriers and/or providing extra support for a disabled worker or job applicant. This is the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

When the duty arises, an employer is under a positive and proactive duty to take steps to remove or reduce or prevent the obstacles you face as a disabled worker or job applicant.

The reasonableness of a potential adjustment is determined by several factors including the following:

- the effectiveness of the adjustment in preventing the disadvantage;
- the cost of the adjustment and the resources of the institution;
- the practicality of the changes;
- the potential health and safety risks;
- the potential benefit to other staff and visitors;
- the availability of funding to support the change, for example, Access to Work funding (see Section 4.4.1).

It is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of reasonable adjustments as what is reasonable in one situation, may be different from what is reasonable in another, but the sections below detail some of the typical reasonable adjustments that might be possible at different employment stages from application to being on the job. Reasonable adjustments are always specific to the individual and the specifics of the job and employment context. Many of these adjustments have no or minimal cost implications.

Further support regarding adjustments is available through [EmployAbility](#). They can advise you on any adjustments you may need for tests, interviews or assessment exercises and, if you would like them to, can also advocate on your behalf to communicate your adjustments to any employer.

### **3.2 Reasonable adjustments at application stage**

In general, as discussed in Section 2.5.1, an employer must not ask a job applicant any questions relating to health or disability unless this is for equality monitoring. However, one of the exceptions to this rule means an employer can ask a question to find out if, as a disabled person, you need a reasonable adjustment during the recruitment process itself. Some key adjustments at this stage would include providing you with an application form in an alternative format or asking if you have any particular requirements in order for an interview to be fully accessible.

An employer only has to make adjustments if they know, or could be reasonably expected to know, that a disabled person has applied or may apply for the job, but an employer must do all that can reasonably be expected to find out whether this is the case and what, if any, adjustments you require.

Although technically not a reasonable adjustment, one initiative to help address potential discrimination during the application process is the guaranteed interview for disabled people. Employers who are 'Disability Confident' are required to offer a guaranteed interview for disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements. This used to be called the Two Ticks Scheme and you may still see



this wording. Disability Confident employers are required to demonstrate good practice for disabled applicants and employees across a number of recruitment and employment factors. See Section 4.2 for further information on Disability positive employers.

### **3.3 Reasonable adjustments at interview stage**

Even if you have not shared information about your disability on application for a position, you can still do this prior to interview and request reasonable adjustments. Most invitations to interview will give you an opportunity to do this by asking if you require any special arrangements for an interview. It does not matter if you have not already mentioned your disability, you can still ask for adjustments at this point.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments for interviews are as follows:

- an ergonomic chair
- more time for tests or exercises (see Section 3.3.1)
- an adjusted interview time
- tests in alternative formats
- an interpreter
- an adjusted interview room
- interview questions in advance

If you have not been asked whether you need adjustments or if you have not told the employer in advance, the employer must still make the adjustments that you need when you arrive, if it is reasonable to do so. However, they may not be able to do as much as if they had been given more notice. For example, an applicant does not tell an employer they need level access because of a mobility impairment and when they arrive, there are steps to the interview room and no lift. The employer is unable to move rooms at short notice but a reasonable adjustment might be that they ask the candidate to attend on another day when an accessible room will be available.

### 3.3.1 Tests and Assessment Centres

An employer should tell you in advance if you are expected to take tests as part of the recruitment process, either prior to selection for interview, or as part of the interview or an assessment centre and give you an outline of what will be involved. This is because, if you are a disabled person and are not told in advance about a test, this may disadvantage you because it does not give you a chance to ask for reasonable adjustments. This may stop you being able to compete on the same terms as other applicants.

An example of a reasonable adjustment for a test would be an applicant with dyslexia being given extra time for a written test. However, an employer does not have to adapt a test to the point where it no longer tests whether you would be able to do the job or not (taking into account any reasonable adjustments that would enable you to do the job).

If you are notified of a selection test you should let the Human Resources department know about your needs, so they can make appropriate arrangements for reasonable adjustments. If the test is at an assessment centre, you should let the centre know and ask if they have a process that you need to follow to receive reasonable adjustments. Most assessment centres for larger recruiters or professional standards exams will have a published procedure on their website for dealing with reasonable adjustments, but you may have to contact them directly.

## 3.4 Reasonable adjustments in employment

An employer is not required to do more than what is reasonable to support a person to be able to work effectively, for example, when changing policies, criteria or practices, they are not required to change the basic nature of the job, where this would go beyond what is reasonable.

It is important to remember that there might be several factors involved in deciding what adjustments you might need on the job and these will depend on you as an individual. Agreeing reasonable adjustments should be seen as a

dialogue where you and your employer work together to find the most effective ways of addressing any potential barriers to you carrying out your role.

It is a helpful strategy to realise you are or will become the 'expert' in what are reasonable adjustments for you. The list below gives some examples of reasonable adjustments that could be made in relation to your role or working environment. It is important to remember that many of these adjustments incur very little cost and where there are financial implications, there is money available to fund these (see Section 4.4.1).

- making physical adjustments to the office/building in which the person works (including the provision of special equipment, such as assistive technology, ergonomic chair);
- re-allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person; if there is a part of your job that is difficult or impossible to do, then it may be that getting someone else to do this, or restructuring the team so that the task is covered by other means, would be reasonable;
- allowing flexible working hours, for example, to enable the individual to be away from the office for assessment, treatment or rehabilitation;
- making changes to procedures or working practices;
- providing additional training or retraining;
- modifying equipment and providing written documentation in alternative formats (e.g. large print, audio etc);
- providing a support worker (e.g., a reader or interpreter or mentor) or allocating additional support or supervision from someone in your team.

### **3.5 Failure to make reasonable adjustments**

Employers are bound by a need to have a proactive response to making reasonable adjustments for an employee and adjustments should be made according to your needs and the size and resources of the organisation. If you are a disabled person and you can show that there were barriers the employer should

have identified and reasonable adjustments that the employer could have made, and the employer does nothing, you can bring a claim against your employer in an Employment Tribunal. If this is successful, the employer may be ordered to pay you compensation as well as make the reasonable adjustments.

#### **4. Sources of support for disabled applicants and employees**

Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise at the University of Southampton has a number of specific services and resources in addition to the Disability, Employability and Adjustments information session:

##### **General equality and diversity information**

The Careers team has some general advice for students covering other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/support/equality/>

##### **Practice Psychometric Tests**

If you need extra time for psychometric tests, many practice test providers enable you to add additional time. For further information relating to psychometric tests please see the [UoS Career Hub](#).

##### **Workshops and careers events**

If you need any adjustments, e.g. slides in advance, handouts on coloured paper, accessible room, please let us know in advance if possible. Email [careers@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:careers@southampton.ac.uk) with details of the event you are attending, or wish to attend, and the adjustments required.

##### **Careers guidance and Ask the Adviser appointments**

Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise offers all students the opportunity to get personal help on careers related issues via Ask the Adviser appointments and guidance appointments. [Ask the Adviser appointments](#) run every weekday in term time and vacations, and are short, 15 minute discussions, which can include referral to a longer 45-minute guidance appointment. Students with a disability can book directly into a guidance appointment by contacting the careers team

---

Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise | 023 8059 3501  
[careers@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:careers@southampton.ac.uk) [www.southampton.ac.uk/careers](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers)

either in person, by emailing [careers@southampton.ac.uk](mailto:careers@southampton.ac.uk) or phoning 023 8059 3501.

#### **4.1 Organisations and schemes offering information, guidance and support**

There are a large number of organisations, websites, and free resources that can support disabled people into and within work; and this number is growing all the time. Some of these are disability specific, for example, the National Autistic Society or Blind in Business, but many are useful for students with all types of disability and learning difficulty. Some will advertise recruitment opportunities that are not available to other jobseekers.

As a disabled student you are encouraged to use all the tools and resources at your disposal in the search for a job and explore these networks and resources alongside general careers advice and information.

Below is an A-Z selection of organisations and schemes that provide employment information, support and guidance and career opportunities for disabled people.

For employer organisations and forums see Section 4.2 – some of these include an employer directory.

##### **Action on Hearing Loss**

Action on Hearing Loss (previously The Royal National Institute for Deaf People) has employment advisers and offers information and support on various issues, including communication and support, CV and interview preparation.

[www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk)

##### **Autism Forward**

Our aim is to enable autistic adults to break free of the barriers they face in the workplace and beyond to reach their full potential in life.

Providing grants for specialist mentoring for autistic adults to give them the support and advice they need to make the transition from education to work and find paid or voluntary employment.

[www.autismforward.org.uk](http://www.autismforward.org.uk)

**Autism Hampshire** are a local support group

<https://www.autismhampshire.org.uk/>

### **BBC Extend Scheme**

BBC-wide work placement scheme that offers appropriately experienced and/or qualified disabled people an opportunity to gain paid work experience at the BBC.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/careers/trainee-schemes-and-apprenticeships/extend/>

### **Blind in Business**

A UK charity providing IT, technology training and teaching resources to help visually impaired and blind people. Blind in Business supports students with practical training and employment services to find graduate jobs.

<http://www.blindinbusiness.org.uk>

### **British Dyslexia Association (BDA)**

Provides information, advice and support to adults with dyslexia looking for and in employment, including suggestions for reasonable adjustments.

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

### **The British Association for Supported Employment (BASE)**

Supported Employment is a model for supporting people with significant disabilities to secure and retain paid employment. The model uses a partnership strategy to enable people with disabilities to achieve sustainable long-term employment and businesses to employ valuable workers. BASE represents agencies involved in securing employment for people with disabilities. These member organisations can give advice and support throughout the process of looking for and gaining a job.

<http://base-uk.org/>

### **British Stammering Association**

Provides information and support on stammering, including a closed Facebook page for members. Also provides related services to employers.

<http://www.stammering.org/get-involved/facebook-and-twitter>

### **Change100 – internship scheme for students with a disability**

Set up by Leonard Cheshire Disability and working with a range of employers.

<https://www.leonardcheshire.org/what-we-can-do-you/working/employment-support-and-internships/internships-students-and-graduates>

### **Civil Service Fast Stream Summer Diversity Internship Programme**

The Summer Internship Programme runs across July and August. It is open to undergraduates and graduates with disabilities with the aim of introducing trainees to work in the UK civil service, in a range of government departments.

<https://www.faststream.gov.uk/summer-diversity-internship-programme/index.html>

### **Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs)**

DEAs are based at local Job Centres and can provide help in looking for a job and information on disability friendly employers. They can arrange for specialist assessments to help with identification of skills and experience and suitable roles.

<https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/looking-for-a-job>

### **Disability Rights UK**

Disability Rights UK is a national registered charity which works to relieve the poverty and improve the living standards of disabled people. They offer advice and support in relation to employment issues.

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

### **EmployAbility**

A not-for-profit organisation dedicated to assisting students and graduates with all disabilities, including dyslexia or long-term health conditions, into employment. They run a range of programmes for large international and UK employers, including internships and graduate recruitment, to match talented students to disability inclusive employers. Their team offers free support, advice and guidance to students and graduates throughout the entire recruitment process.

<http://www.employ-ability.org.uk/>

### **Epilepsy Action**

Provides information and guidance, including about whether and how to share disability information with employers and colleagues.

<https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/employment>

### **Equality and Human Rights Commission**

Provides information and guidance about your rights as a disabled applicant and employee under equality law. Provides further clarification about the legal requirements and examples of reasonable adjustments.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/know-your-rights>

### **Evenbreak**

Social enterprise jobs board for disabled people and working with both employers and disabled jobseekers to provide advice, promote good practice, articles and news as well as vacancies.

<http://www.evenbreak.co.uk/>

### **Exceptional Individuals**

Organisation providing free neurodiversity education, recruitment and employment support to individuals who are neurodiverse. Their resources include a Jobs Board.

<https://exceptionalindividuals.com/candidates/neurodiverse-jobs-board-uk/>

### **Flexa**

Job site specialising in flexible and part time roles that are work/life balance friendly

<https://flexa.careers/>

### **MyPlus Students' Club**

Provides a student forum for information and guidance, case studies, resources and events to help disabled students into graduate employment. Also, lots of useful information to help whilst at university, including advice from fellow



students. They also work closely with employers from a number of sectors to promote inclusive workplaces and practices.

<http://myplusstudentsclub.com/>

### **National Autistic Society – Employment Services**

The service offers specialist training and support for autistic people wishing to get into work. The National Autistic Society also helps employers with the recruitment, training and retention of staff who are autistic.

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/employment>

<https://www.autism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment>

### **Remploy**

Remploy supports disabled people towards finding work and staying in work. They offer advice on the job search and application process, including tools to assess skills and advice relating to sharing disability information.

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/individuals/finding-work-and-support-work>

Remploy are also contracted by Access to Work to provide support services to people with mental health issues. This service is aimed at helping people to remain in or return to work and can be funded through Access to Work.

<https://www.remploy.co.uk/employers/mental-health-and-wellbeing/workplace-mental-health-support-service-employers>

### **Royal National Association for Deaf People (RAD)**

RAD provides employment support and advice for the deaf community.

<https://royaldeaf.org.uk/advice/>

### **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)**

Provides information and practical support for blind and partially sighted people on finding and retaining a job or starting a business. Action for Blind People is now merged with RNIB.

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/equality-and-employment>

## **Scope**

Scope is a charity that supports people in all aspects of disability including work.

<http://www.scope.org.uk/support/disabled-people/work>

## **Targetjobs - Graduate publisher and website**

Produce a range of student and graduate guides. There is a comprehensive section on Diversity on the website including a section on Disability and mental health.

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/equality-and-diversity/320153-disability-and-mental-health-diversity-matters>

#### 4.1.1 Support for self-employment or enterprise activities

**Community Catalysts** work creatively with individuals, supporting them to set up their own businesses; covering everything from support with tax forms to purchasing equipment that individuals can rent.

<http://www.communitycatalysts.co.uk/>

Disabled people who want to set up their own business will be able to get help from Access to Work funding (see Section 4.4.1) if they enroll on the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA). <https://www.gov.uk/new-enterprise-allowance>

**Careers, Employability and Student Enterprise** regularly runs workshops and other events to support students who are interested in Student Enterprise or setting up their own business and can help students access support provided by the University. The Students' Union (SUSU) have two student societies related to enterprise and self-employment: Fish on Toast and Enactus. More details on our website.

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/enterprise/>

## 4.2 Disability positive employers

You should not assume your disability is a disincentive to an employer to offer you a job; there are many employers who are actively recruiting disabled applicants and recognise the particular contribution that their skills and experience can bring.

In order to know that you are investing your time and energies in applying to an organisation that will value what you can bring, you can actively seek out employers who show a positive attitude towards disability. Obtaining this information in advance of making an application can give you a useful insight into whether an organisation is one in which you would want to work.

For example, make efforts to find out what policies and provisions an employer has in place to support disabled people. Take the opportunity to talk to staff members at recruitment events such as careers fairs or contact the Human Resources department or Graduate Recruitment team for information.

Many employers are signing up to be “Disability Confident”, the government scheme launched in 2014, and many also belong to organisations or forums such as the Business Disability Forum and Mindful Employer. (See Section 4.2, Disability positive employers, for further information). You may find their logos on the company website or application documents.

It can be difficult to find such information on the organisation website, but try sections such as ‘Working here’, ‘About us’ or ‘Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)’, or use the search function. Sometimes this information may only be clear once you start the process of applying.

Some ways of finding out if an employer is disability positive are to look out for the following

- some form of stated commitment to equality in recruitment literature and on their website;
- policies on Equal Opportunity or Diversity or Disability;

- active encouragement of applicants to request adjustments if required;
- disabled staff profiles;
- offering application forms in alternative formats;
- offering guaranteed interviews (formerly the Two Ticks scheme);
- targeted work experience opportunities or open days;
- vacancies advertised on specialist job sites or via support organisations such as those listed in Section 4.1;
- commitment to the government scheme, Disability Confident;
- membership of disability organisations or employer forums, for example Business Disability Forum, Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, Mindful Employer, Dyslexia Friendly:



## Disability Confident Employers and Guaranteed Interviews

Look for job adverts and application forms carrying the Disability Confident Employer symbol (see below). To be Disability Confident an organisation has to demonstrate that they have signed up to five key commitments on disability, including inclusive and accessible recruitment and guaranteeing an interview to all applicants with disabilities who fulfil the minimum job criteria. The scheme has three levels of achievement, 'committed', 'employer' or 'leader' which recognise their progression and degree of positive action. Disability Confident supersedes the Two Ticks 'positive about disabled people' scheme.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up>



### **Mindful Employer**

This is a Charter for employers who are positive about mental health and recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce. Look for the symbol (below) on their recruitment publicity. Their website contains a full list of private, public and voluntary sector signatories as well as advice and support.

<https://www.mindfulemployer.dpt.nhs.uk/our-charter>



### **Dyslexia Friendly Employer**

This is a quality mark awarded by the British Dyslexia Association (below) for organisations that have demonstrated a real commitment to equality and diversity by meeting standards covering the effective policy, training and employment of staff with dyslexia.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/services/quality-mark>



### **Business Disability Forum**

Business Disability Forum provides support to organisations in becoming fully accessible to disabled employees and customers. They work with their many members, with the aim of removing the barriers between public and private organisations and disabled people. Their website contains a full list of their member employers, partners and those who have reached gold, silver or bronze in their Disability Standard scheme.

<http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/about-us#content>



### **ENEI (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion)**

Leading UK employer network covering all aspects of equality and inclusion issues in the workplace. It supports employers in the creation of inclusive and diverse workplaces. A list of their members can be accessed on their website.

<https://www.enei.org.uk/>



#### **4.2.1 Recruitment Agencies**

Recruitment agencies are also bound by the Equality Act. If they are members of the professional association REC (Recruitment Employers Confederation), they will be operating under the REC code of professional practice and may have also signed up to their Diversity Pledge. You do not have to disclose information to the agency, but if you do, your consultant can help you apply for Access to Work funding for any short term or temporary work as well as any permanent positions.

[www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com)

### **4.3 Support in employment**

As stated in Section 3.4 above, there is provision for disabled people within employment in relation to disability, in the form of reasonable adjustments. Many students are concerned that the cost of adjustments will act as a disincentive for employers to give a job to a disabled person, but there is government funding available (through Access to Work (Section 4.4.1)) to support the implementation of these needs and provide support within work.



## 4.4 Access to Work funding

Access to Work is a funding scheme to provide financial support to disabled people in the workplace in practical ways. It applies to any paid job, part-time or full-time, permanent or temporary, including internships. There is no minimum number of hours for eligibility for support under the scheme.

Access to Work can pay for a range of different provisions and supports, from equipment to human support; some typical examples are:

- modifying equipment and providing specialist software, e.g. text to speech software;
- fare to work if you can't use public transport, e.g. for those with mobility problems or Chronic Fatigue;
- a support worker or mentor to help with areas such as social interaction personal organisation;
- a support service if you have a mental health condition;
- the cost of moving equipment if you change jobs or locations (subject to agreement with Access to Work)

Although employers are expected to make a contribution to adjustments under the scheme, for small companies no contribution is required, so the cost of reasonable adjustments should not be a disincentive for small businesses to employ disabled people.

Access to Work is something that you can start the process of applying for as soon as you have an offer of employment so provisions can be in place when you start work.

### *How much will Access to Work pay?*

The financial contributions that Access to Work can make are on a scale, which depend on the size of the organisation and the length of time a person has been in a role. Access to work grants are reviewed once a year and there is a current cap of £69,260 (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025).

Access to Work will consider paying grants of up to 100% of the cost of support for:

- self employed people;
- people who have been working for less than six weeks when they first apply for Access to Work;
- the Mental Health Support Service;
- support workers;
- additional travel to work and travel in work costs;
- communication support at interviews.

The level of grant will depend on:

- whether you are employed or self-employed;
- how long you have been in the job;
- the type of help required.

For people working for an employer who have been in the job for 6 weeks or more and who need special equipment or adaptations to premises, Access to Work pays a proportion of the costs of support, to be shared with the employer.

How is the support paid for?

It is the employer's (or self-employed person's) responsibility to purchase and provide the support required and then to reclaim the cost from Access to Work. Your employer should not purchase any items until Access to Work has notified you both that they have approved the agreed support.

*What do you need to do to get Access to Work funding?*

The quickest and easiest way to [apply for Access to Work is online](#). You can also apply by calling the Access to Work helpline listed on page 44. You will be asked what help and support you need when you apply and Access to Work will also contact your employer for more information.

In order to obtain the necessary specialist or technical advice to process your application, the Access to Work Adviser can arrange for a specialist contractor, such as the RNIB, to visit you at work to complete an assessment and recommend appropriate support. A written and confidential report will be sent to the Access to Work Adviser, who will use the information to help them to decide on the level of support that can be approved. You do not have the right to see this report at this stage, however, if you would like a copy of the assessment report you can contact the Access to Work Adviser to request one be sent to you in your preferred format.

You do not need to have an assessment in all cases, and if you know what equipment you want, you can apply for it online. However, in most cases a formal assessment is recommended, as a qualified assessor might be able to identify solutions that you are not aware of. A formal assessment should always be done in person, rather than over the telephone. The length of time taken to process an application varies depending on individual circumstance. However, if there is any delay the Access to Work Adviser should explore temporary alternatives, for example, a support worker.

Before the assessment you should think about your job, what tasks you are required to do and how your disability impacts upon them. This will ensure your full input into the process of assessing your needs at work.

#### *What information do you need to apply for Access to Work?*

There are actions that you can take to help the Access to Work Adviser deal with the application quickly. Do not wait until you have started your new job before asking for help. The sooner Access to Work knows about the request for support, the more time they will have to get help ready for when you start.

The Access to Work Adviser will need some detailed information and it will help if you can provide the following:

- Your workplace address;
- your expected start date;

- the name, email address and work phone number of a workplace contact – this should be someone who can authorise payment for the items and services in your support offer.

You'll also need to explain:

- how your condition affects your work;
- what help you're already getting;
- what else could help you.

Further information on the Access to Work scheme is available from:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>.

Contact details for Access to Work:

Telephone: 0800 121 7479

Textphone: 0800 121 7579

## 5. Positively promoting your disability

### 5.1 Why promote your disability?

Disability is not something that you should consider as ‘a lack’ or something that you need to account for to a prospective employer. As a disabled person you should consider the key skills and strategies that you may have acquired or developed *because* of your disability rather than *in spite of it*. These may be advantageous for the job that you decide to do.

Here are some examples of how disabled students have considered how their experiences as a disabled person might be expressed as strengths or assets in the application process and might make them more suited to a specific role.

‘Having a personal assistant has developed my organisational skills, communication skills and budget management skills.’

‘As a dyslexic I have strong lateral thinking skills, which are ideal for problem solving roles.’

‘As a disabled person I am more conscious of the differing individual needs of people, which has been a benefit in my work with the public.’

### 5.2 Presenting your disability on application forms and in CVs

Your CV and application form is the way in which you present your skills and experiences to their best advantage to a prospective employer. Any free text, such as a personal profile on a CV, a personal statement on an application form or a paragraph in a covering letter, can be used as an opportunity for you to represent yourself as a disabled person in a positive way.

When writing a personal statement, for example in a CV or covering letter, you are effectively trying to find a way to sum up in a succinct and punchy way three

things: who you are; what you can bring to a role and, optionally, what you are looking for. Below are two examples of extracts from these types of statements – the first sums up the applicant's skills and the second does this with explicit reference to the applicant's disability:

'During my degree I successfully combined my studies with work and other commitments showing myself to be self-motivated, organised and capable of working under pressure. I have a clear, logical mind with a practical approach to problem solving and a drive to see things through to completion.'

'I have a visual impairment, but this has not in any way prevented me from successfully completing a demanding degree course and further education qualifications. Far from being a disadvantage, this has increased my awareness of the needs of others and has increased my determination to succeed and to persevere when obstacles are placed in my path.'

Remember to use all of the careers resources available to you as a student in making the best possible application and consider ways that you might be able to make direct reference to your disability to positively represent your particular skills and attributes to a prospective employer.

### 5.2.1 Disability-related gaps in CVs

Many applicants have 'gaps' in their CVs and concerns about how they account for these. As a disabled student you may have some gaps in your CV as a result of being unable to work or study at certain times. You may be concerned about how to represent these, particularly if you do not wish to declare your disability at the application stage.

There is no one right way of dealing with this – you need to feel comfortable about whatever you do, but here are some suggestions:

- Think about using a skills-based CV where your skills take primacy and there is less emphasis on your chronological work experience.

- Try to focus less on what you have not done and more on your achievements. Remember it is not just direct work experience that counts; voluntary/community work, work placements, coursework, and personal projects, are all ways to highlight your transferrable skills.
- You can make direct reference to time out if you want to do so by saying that you have had a disability-related break from work/study.
- Remember to be honest and positive – do not lie.
- If you wish to expand on a gap in your CV, you can use your covering letter, but don't let this become the main message which should be focused on your motivation to join the company and ability to do the job.

### **5.3 Discussing your disability within an interview**

As discussed in Section 2, there is no requirement for you to discuss your disability within an interview (even if the disability is a visible one that may be seemingly evident to the interviewer) and it is unlawful for a prospective employer to ask you direct questions about your disability or health unless you have shared this.

However, you may want to consider the possibility of discussing your disability within an interview. This might be beneficial to you as being open about the difficulties you have had and focusing on the strategies you have used to overcome them demonstrates maturity and determination to a prospective employer. This also gives you an opportunity to suggest how these particular skills and strategies can be transferred to the workplace and be directly relevant to the role.

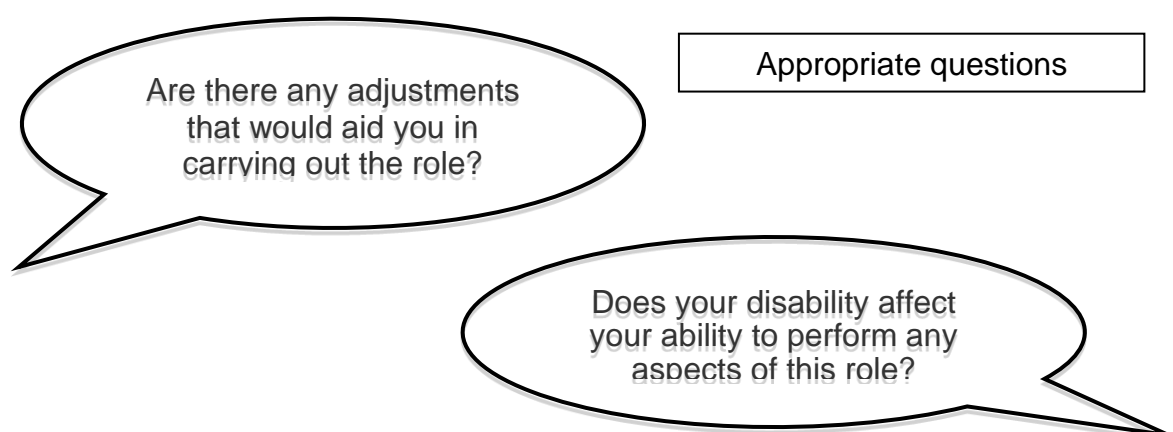
#### **5.3.1 Direct questions about your disability**

Remember, an interview should be spent explaining how you are suitable for the job, not focusing on your disability. However, disability may come up within the interview if you have shared details previously and it is important that you are prepared for this and have an awareness of what are reasonable questions for a prospective employer to ask, as well as knowing what is unnecessary or inappropriate.

The Equality Act does not prohibit the interview panel from asking questions about a disabled applicant's impairment, as long as the questions concern:

- the applicant's requirement for reasonable adjustments;
- the applicant's ability to meet the competence standards for the job.

Some examples of appropriate direct questions about disability might be:



You may want to spend some time in preparation for an interview thinking about how you would answer these questions, both in terms of the possible impact of your disability on the specifics of the role and the support or accommodations that might help you. This will demonstrate a proactive approach to management of your disability. Rehearsing possible answers (aloud) to potential interview questions allows you develop a coherent and positive response based on your own experiences, which will make you more confident on the day.



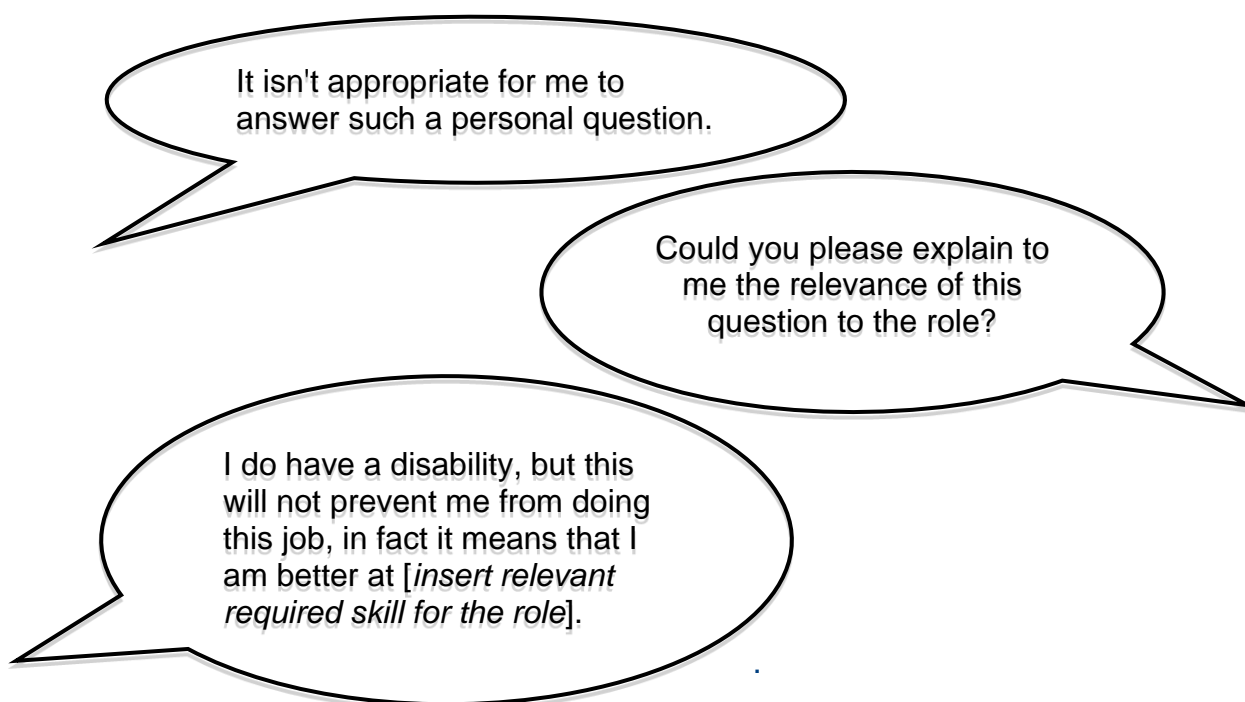
### 5.3.2 Difficult questions about your disability

Despite some questions around disability now being unlawful, unfortunately you may still experience these inappropriate questions in an interview situation.

Examples of questions of this type could be along the lines of the following:



You should think about ways that you might respond to these if you encounter them. Remember that you do not have to answer any question that you feel is inappropriate or irrelevant in respect of the job you are applying for. Here are some possible responses that you can use to either reject answering the question outright or turning it to your advantage:



Also try to remember that although it is not your responsibility to educate employers in disability equality, you may encounter individuals who have little firsthand experience of dealing with disability, and your response could help increase levels of awareness. Again, planning and practising your approach to these sorts of questions can enable you to stay composed and confident, even in the face of inappropriate questions.

## **5.4 Skills identification**

In order to help you to reflect on your skills you may find a Skills Audit a useful way to build up a fuller picture of your skillset and therefore your suitability for particular roles or careers pathways. For information about Skills Audits see the UoS Career Hub:

<https://southampton.careercentre.me/welcome/university-of-southampton>

## **References:**

Adapted information from the following sources is used in this guide:

Equality and Human Rights Commission [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

UK Government [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Equality Challenge Unit, part of Advance HE [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

University of Kent [www.kent.ac.uk/careers](http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers)