

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF DISABLED STUDENTS



A guide for Tutors, Lecturers and Support Staff

We all want students to be fully involved with every aspect of University life and to benefit fully and enjoy the learning and life experience; for a disabled student this should be no different.

By taking certain steps it is hoped we can fulfil this desire, enabling all students to get the most out of their time studying with us.

The term 'disabled' is not meant to be derogatory or offend, as we understand some students will not see themselves as being disabled or having a 'disability'. The University only uses this term to:

'cover the barriers faced by people with a wide range of physical and sensory impairments, including specific learning difficulties, chronic health conditions and mental health difficulties'

Health and Safety is often seen as the 'stick' or the excuse to stop people doing something.

Unfortunately, this can also be the case with disabled students, especially where well-placed but misguided concern for the student's health and safety emanates from a lack of understanding of a person's abilities and how these interact with academic needs.

Often our own limited experiences can cloud our judgement, resulting in over-bearing restrictions, when none are actually required.

This booklet is all about providing easy to understand information and advice, to help both the disabled student and the College / School.

Why do anything? The Equality Act places a duty on all Higher Education Institutions to actively promote disability equality and produce a Disability Equality Scheme.

'The Equality Act defines disability as a 'physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse affect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities''

In addition to equality legislation, every day health and safety matters are also governed by

extensive legislation, all of which seek to ensure no one is harmed or hurt because of their work.

In order for Bangor University to meet its moral and legal obligations and of course its own desire to meet the needs of disabled students, a Disability Equality Scheme and Code of Practice on Inclusive Provision for Disabled Students have been adopted. In these, the University declares its intent to:

'take all possible practicable steps to enable full participation by disabled students in all aspects of University life'



The purpose of this Booklet is to provide generic advice and guidance to Colleges and Schools on health and safety issues that may arise if a disabled student starts to study with the College / School and how to overcome potential barriers.

The publication is aimed especially at Personal and Course Tutors, Lecturers, Technicians, Disability Tutors and Health and Safety Co-ordinators. It includes advice on:

- The College / School's health and safety responsibilities towards disabled students;
- Complying with health and safety and disability discrimination legislation without prejudicing either; and,
- Ways to ensure trouble-free studies for the student.

The booklet complements information already provided by the Disability Equality Scheme and Code of Practice, copies of which are available from Student Services.

General concerns for Health and safety are sometimes raised when a disabled student attends their College / School for the first time, eg:

- “What do we need to do in an emergency eg fire?”
- “Can all practical elements of the course be carried out safely?”
- “Should teaching be moved to a more accessible location?”
- “Will staff / students require specific training to support the disabled student?”
- “Will specific teaching aids / support be required, if so by who?”

In reality, the majority of disabled students will cause no more problems to you than any other student. The only difference is they may need a little extra help and assistance to settle down into student life or to deal with specific parts of the course.

The most important element of assessing the health and safety needs of a disabled student is to ‘talk’ with him or her and to ensure their involvement in any needs assessment you undertake. We should never ‘assume’ as we are all different and have differing needs.

Between the student, members of staff at the College / School, Health and Safety and the Disability Services (at Students Services) practical support can be identified and provided.

Selection and admission of disabled students: Bangor University is committed to increasing opportunities for those entering higher education.



This means each applicant is considered on their merit and potential to succeed on and benefit from their chosen programme.

The University ‘views applications from disabled applicants on the same grounds that apply to all applicants’

To help ensure Colleges / Schools meet this strategic obligation they should be aware of, and follow the guidance outlined in the ‘Code of Practice on Inclusive Provision for Disabled Students’.

H health and safety of disabled students. It is Bangor University’s policy to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees, students, visitors, contractors and others.

This commitment is primarily met through risk assessments and each College / School should carry out a risk assessment to identify the significant hazards associated with their activities and courses.



These assessments will not only identify the significant risks, but also the controls needed to eliminate or control them. The overall aim being to prevent anybody from being harmed or injured.

Remember. The only difference, if a disabled student is on the course, is that the existing risk assessment may need reviewing to identify if adjustments are required to support the student to enable full participation, or due to the buildings and rooms they will visit during the course of their studies.

It is important Colleges / Schools are not frightened by a disability, restricting the

student, stopping them getting the most from their course. Sometimes restrictions will be necessary, but not always.

There are many steps which can be taken to ensure the student can participate fully and the first step to achieving this is for Colleges / Schools to:

- Create an environment of openness. Encouraging students to highlight issues which may affect their ability to carry out elements of the course.
- Talk to disabled students to identify issues that may arise during their training

It is important this discussion:

- Is open and relaxed
- Takes place with the student and the Personal Tutor and possibly the Disability Tutor or Health and Safety Co-ordinator
- Highlights physical activities and practical sessions the student will be involved in
- Checks the student can access the College / School General Office and library facilities
- Describes areas the student may visit during their course
- Visit these areas if needed
- Specifically asks the student if they have any concerns or foresee any problems
- Ascertain if any specialist equipment or support will be required
- Identifies if special provisions are needed in the event of an emergency evacuation or situation (see *Emergency Procedures below*)

Risk assessments: Once this talk has taken place with the student, Colleges / Schools should then work with their Health and Safety Co-ordinator / Disability Tutor to:

- Prepare a risk assessment for the student addressing any of the issues raised

- If necessary seek specialist advice from Disability Services, Student Services or Health and Safety.
- Agree the risk assessment with the student
- Make sure the student knows and understands the controls that have been put in place to ensure their health and safety
- Communicate the risk assessment to the relevant College / School staff

Examples outlined in this booklet should give you an idea of what help can be given to disabled students.

Example 1:

Laboratory Activities: A physically disabled student who sometimes used a wheelchair experiences severe pain when sitting for prolonged periods at a bench to study samples. Sometimes because of the pain the student cannot complete her work in the same time as other students.

Action: The Disability Advisor and School Safety Co-ordinator helped to assess all laboratory work. This resulted in the purchase of a suitable chair and the use of a more ergonomic microscope so the student no longer had to place undue pressure on their lower back. In addition, somewhere nearby to safely 'prop-up' their crutches was found so nobody tripped over them.

The student was able to complete the practical elements of the course with no great difficulties.



Example 2:

Field Work: A student was concerned they could not travel from the minibus across rough terrain to a field location to take samples. This was located in an area of special scientific interest and managed by the Countryside Council for Wales.

Action: The Tutor assessed the situation and arranged with the Countryside Council Warden to open the access gate to the adjacent private road. This meant the student could safely gain access near to the sample site. The student then had no problems studying the plant life and taking samples.

Also, gaining vehicular access closer to the sample site allowed the Tutor to transport heavier scientific equipment to the sample location; this would not previously have been possible as the equipment was too heavy to carry safely.



Example 3:

A student with a hearing impairment wanted to study a Humanities course.

The Disability Adviser, following a chat with the Student and School staff, drew up a Personal Learning Support Plan and ensured Hearing Loops were installed in the Lecture and Seminar Rooms. A 'pager' was also given to the student.

The 'pager' ensured the student was notified when the fire alarm activated so they could evacuate with everyone else. The pager also worked at their Hall of Residence and at the Students' Union.

Student Services also assisted the Personal Tutor by providing advice on clear

communication and by allowing the student to lip read where necessary.

Also, the School's extensive use of Blackboard proved invaluable to the student.



Hearing or Induction Loops are located in various locations across the University. These help people who are hard of hearing who use a hearing aid (or loop listener) to hear sounds more clearly because it reduces or cuts out background noise.

Several buildings have 'loop' fire alarm systems that are linked to Pagers.

Disability Services, part of Student Services, provide a fantastic support service for Colleges / Schools and disabled students.

This service involves working with the student and the College / School to discuss the student's requirements and the arrangements that can be put into place for them (Personal Learning Support Plan). In addition, they offer the following support:

- *Financial Support:* Advice on Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) is available from the Disability Adviser
- *The Access Centre:* Is an accredited Assessment Centre who conduct Assessment of Needs for DSA and identifies strategies to remove barriers to help students study to the best of their potential
- *Mental Health Advisers:* Offer personal support to students. Provisions can also be made for students to see an Adviser in a more accessible location

- *Students' Union:* Provides information, advice and a representation service to students
- *Dyslexia Team:* Provides assistance for dyslexic students
- *Study Support Centres:* The Centres (Main Arts Library and Adeilad Deiniol) provide a range of assistive technology to support students with a range of impairments. Both sites are accessible to wheelchair users

Much of the direct support will then be provided by the College's / School's own Disability Tutor or the student's Personal Tutor; as these are the best placed people to do so.

Disability Tutors are usually members of the College's / School's academic staff who act as a point of reference for disabled students and colleagues in their College / School.

Disability Services will be able to tell you who your School Disability Tutor is
www.bangor.ac.uk/studentsservices/disability

Emergency procedures: Disability Services will identify during the preparation of the student's Personal Learning Support Plan, if the student needs assistance to evacuate a building in an emergency.



If assistance is needed, Disability Services notes this on the Personal Learning Support Plan, informing Health and Safety in the process.

Health and Safety will then liaise with the College / School (before the student starts their course) to discuss what the student's course entails eg physical activities and practical sessions and where the student will be studying.

Once the student starts, Health and Safety will arrange a meeting, if necessary with the student and the College / School to discuss specific emergency arrangements. From this information a Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP) will be prepared (see *Information Sheet – Evacuation Procedures for Disabled People (from the University's Fire Safety Policy Standard)*).

The completed PEEP will be communicated to the student and the College / School. Students can contact Health and Safety whenever they feel their PEEP requires updating or if they have concerns.

Example 4:

A student with cerebral palsy was following a science degree programme and was to embark on their final year project. The Project theme and scope was discussed with the student, the Tutor and the Student's 'support worker' and a suitable project was designed.

The chosen Project allowed the student to participate fully in the research of animal growth and in doing so gain a BSc honours degree. The student then went on to successfully complete an MSc at Bangor, undertaking another research project, which was published in a peer reviewed journal.

Further assistance: Remember you are not on your own. Disability Services is the catalyst for all information regarding student disabilities.



In addition, your own College / School Health and Safety Co-ordinator, Disability Tutor and Health

and Safety will be able to advise on any issues you are unsure of when assessing the needs of a disabled student.

Example 5:

Allergies: over the years numerous students have suffered forms of potentially serious allergies, including Latex and Alcohol.

For many chemical and environmental sciences the use of latex gloves and alcohol as preservative are commonplace. Having students with allergies to these can be difficult to manage, however in such cases the risks have been managed and students have gone on to complete their studies.

Assessing chemical usage, substituting alcohol use where possible and implementing good laboratory hygiene practices succeeded in ensuring a safe learning environment.



Example 6:

A student who regularly uses a wheel chair required a Personal Emergency Egress Plan (PEEP) – ‘a how to get out of the building safely plan’.

The Tutor and School Safety Co-ordinator got together with the student and chatted on which buildings they would visit whilst at the University and from there consulted with Health and Safety on what emergency support systems were in place for these.

A PEEP was produced by the School for the academic and learning support buildings and the student was fully briefed on emergency protocols. In this case the use of ‘safe refuge points’ was the core safeguard employed, together with ensuring everyone understood what was required and when.

The buildings highlighted by the PEEP will shortly have ‘evacuation lifts’ installed; these will allow assisted evacuation of wheelchair bound staff and students without the need to put anyone at risk.



Useful contacts:

Disability Services (Student Services) - www.bangor.ac.uk/student-services/disability/index.php.en

Health and Safety - www.hss.bangor.ac.uk

United Kingdom Disabled People’s Council - dpac.uk.net/tag/united-kingdom-disabled-peoples-council/

Dyslexia Team – www.bangor.ac.uk/student-services/disability/dyslexia.php.en

Careers & Employability Service - www.bangor.ac.uk/careers/index.php.en

The ACCESS Centre - www.bangor.ac.uk/access-centre/index.php.en

Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) - www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas

Student Services Health and Well-being - www.bangor.ac.uk/student-services/wellbeing/index.php.en