

Common Framework for supporting disabled students

The collegiate University adopted a common framework statement in 2014 that underpins its procedures for supporting disabled students, and sets out a vision to maintain exemplary inclusive practice for students with disabilities and to meet its Equality Act duties.

The guiding principles set out in the framework are:

1. To maintain an anticipatory approach, which means thinking ahead about the range of adjustments that might be made for potential students without needing reference to individuals.
2. To use and develop communication systems to share information about disabled students effectively, respecting confidentiality and the need for sensitivity.
3. That the Disability Advisory Service will play a central role in assessing student need and making recommendations for reasonable adjustments and will work collaboratively with students, colleges, departments and all other relevant sections of the University.
4. Each college, PPH and department/faculty will designate a senior member of staff to take a lead role in disability-related matters, known as the disability lead. This person should have strategic oversight of provision for disabled students within their college or department. Each college and department will also appoint a disability coordinator to oversee implementation of provision for disabled students. This person must also be in a position to make necessary adjustments to meet the day-to-day needs of disabled students.
5. Staff will take a collaborative approach to ensure smooth implementation of reasonable adjustments. For undergraduates, colleges will maintain oversight of provision, with departments maintaining oversight for graduates, in close consultation with the Disability Advisory Service.
6. That the collegiate University will ensure many opportunities are available for students to disclose disabilities and engage in collaborative and timely assessment of their support needs.

7. That the collegiate University will encourage and support them to develop autonomy, independence and self-agency in managing their disability.
8. That colleagues working with disabled students will have access to training and support in order to carry out their roles effectively.

An annual review takes place to monitor the implementation of the framework and as a means of sharing best practice across the University. This review is conducted by the Disability Advisory Service and overseen by the Student Welfare Sub-Committee.

Further Information

[Full text of the Common Framework for Supporting Disabled Students](#)

Other relevant University policies

In addition to the Common Framework, there are other policies and statements relevant to the University's provision for disabled students.

University Equality Policy

The University's Equality Policy expresses the University's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of its students and staff are respected. Responsibility for upholding these principles is extended to all members of the University community. The University embraces diversity and seeks to achieve equity in experience, progression and achievement through the implementation of transparent policies, practices and procedures and provision of effective support. In particular, the University commits to encouraging applications from the widest pool of candidates, especially where representation is disproportionately low. Decisions on the admission of students will be based solely on the individual merits of each candidate and the application of selection criteria appropriate to the course of study. In all its activities, the University will take steps to meet the needs of individuals with protected characteristics, including disability, where these are different from others.

[Full text of the University's Equality Policy](#)

Data Protection Policy

One of the key principles for effectively agreeing and implementing individual adjustments for disabled students is appropriate sharing of information relating to a disability. Data relating to disability is classified as special category data under GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The University sets its framework for ensuring that it meets its obligations under this legislation in its Data Protection Policy. The Policy sets out the six data privacy principles the University must comply with, its aims and commitments, and roles and responsibilities relating to data protection. It also covers the actions that will follow any breach in the legislation and the future review and development of the policy. Personal data must be:

- processed fairly, lawfully and in a transparent manner;
- used only for limited, specified stated purposes and not used or disclosed in any way incompatible with those purposes;
- adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary;

- accurate and, where necessary, up-to-date;
- not kept for longer than necessary; and
- kept safe and secure.

The University has also produced [Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare](#). Guidance on sharing disability-related information effectively and securely is available in this guide [6. Confidentiality and Sharing Information].

[Full text of the University Data Protection Policy](#)

[Information for staff on handling personal data](#)

The University Strategic Plan 2018-2023

The University Strategic Plan 2018-2023 sets out a framework of priorities for the University. In the strategic plan, the University sets out its commitment to equality of opportunity, to engendering inclusivity, and to supporting staff and student wellbeing. The University believes that a diverse staff and student body strengthens research and enhances students' learning. As part of Commitment 2 of the strategic plan, the University commits to offering an excellent academic experience for all students:

'Teaching and assessment at Oxford will provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve and demonstrate their full academic potential. The University will work to reduce continuing gaps in attainment and encourage greater diversity in assessment.'

Supporting student wellbeing is at the heart of our approach to providing the greatest opportunity for all our students to excel. We will work to strengthen the partnership between colleges, academic departments and faculties, and central services to provide the welfare support that our students need to flourish. The University will ensure that teaching is informed by best practice, an inclusive approach to learning, and the opportunities for innovation offered by digital technology.'

[Full text of the Strategic Plan](#)

The University has also developed a new [Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#).

Legislation and Regulation

Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act protects identified groups from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Disability is one of the protected characteristics identified in the Act.

The Equality Act means that the University must:

- take account of disabled people's needs;
- not discriminate against disabled people by treating them less favourably than other people;
- make reasonable adjustments, both anticipatory and individual; and
- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others.

It is permissible in some circumstances to treat disabled people 'more favourably' than others, where to do so would not breach a competence standard.

Further Information

Full information about the Equality Act can be found on [Government webpages, and the Equality and Diversity Unit's webpages](#).

Guidance on the application of the Equality Act for Further and Higher Education providers is available on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), enacted under the Equality Act 2010 requires public organisations to consider the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people across nine 'protected' characteristics, of which disability is one. When any decisions are made by public organisations about how they provide their services and implement policies, they must consider how these decisions will impact on this duty. More detailed information about the PSED is available from the Equality and Human Right Commission and from the University's Equality and Diversity Unit.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018)

The GDPR and Data Protection Act includes new and strengthened requirements for how we protect people's data. There has to be a [lawful basis](#) for processing an individual's data, and when personal data is collected a privacy notice needs to be provided to explain how it will be stored and processed. In addition to keeping accurate records that are safe and secure, [retention schedules](#) should be in place for different types of data. Information about disability is classified as 'special category' data by the legislation. Further information about effective sharing of information relating to disability is given in the Confidentiality and Sharing Information section of this handbook [link to section 6].

Full information about how the University complies with the legislation is available from the [GDPR and the University web-page](#).

Access and Participations Plans

The University has an Access and Participation Plan which is approved by the Office for Students. The plan sets out the University's approach to improving access, success and progression for under-represented groups and those with protected characteristics, including for disabled people. [Full text of the 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan](#) and [the 2020-2021 to 2024-2025 Plan](#). The latest plan sets a target to eliminate the attainment gap that exists between disabled and non-disabled students by 2024-25.