

Key concepts: Reasonable adjustments and inclusivity

Reasonable adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are central to the concept of disability equality. Where a disabled student suffers, or would suffer, a substantial disadvantage, the University is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to overcome that disadvantage. The intention is that the adjustments should level the playing field for the disabled student.

It is important that adjustments meet the needs of the individual disabled student rather than providing a generic response to a class or type of disability. Once implemented, adjustments do not provide automatic precedents for other students, but may be taken into account when considering what would be appropriate in a different case.

The duty is anticipatory which means that the University should not wait until it is asked to consider what adjustments might be made, but should be ready where feasible with solutions to overcome disadvantages. The failure to make reasonable adjustments cannot be legally justified and if an adjustment is deemed to be reasonable then it must be made.

All parts of the University share the duty to take positive steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in education and enjoy the benefits, facilities and services that are provided for students. The Equality Act requires that, so far as is reasonably practicable, disabled students' access to education is approximately the same as that enjoyed by the rest of the student body.

The [Supporting the Student Journey](#) section of this guide provides information about implementing reasonable adjustments at all stages of a student's time at Oxford.

Accessibility

The term accessibility relates to whether all people are able to use, participate in or benefit from a particular resource, service or environment regardless of any disabilities or other needs. This would include, for example, buildings and premises, products and services and sources of information such as websites and printed material. Direct access means that no adjustments or alternative means of access need to be provided and every person is able to gain access in the same way. Indirect access

is where auxiliary aids, additional services or alternative formats need to be used in order to achieve accessibility. Direct access should be facilitated wherever possible.

Guidance for staff on improving the accessibility of University buildings can be found on the [Building adjustments and access](#) page. Guidance on supporting access to teaching and learning resources can be found on the [Accessible communication](#) page.

Anticipatory Duty

The University has an equality duty to not just respond to student need, but to anticipate needs wherever possible. We must think ahead about the common barriers to study anyone within a cohort might experience and remove them, without reference to the needs of specific students.

This means that no part of the University should wait until it is asked to consider what adjustments should be made, but should be ready where feasible with solutions to overcome disadvantages. This creates a more inclusive environment for all students and can also contribute to a greater sense of belonging for disabled students, who feel that the learning environment has been planned to include them from the beginning, without special accommodations needing to be made. This principle applies to all areas of the University's services and infrastructure for students, including all teaching and learning activities.

The [disability lead](#) in each unit, working alongside the leadership team, has a responsibility to ensure that accessibility, inclusivity and the need to take anticipatory action is properly incorporated into the department, unit or college's planning cycle.

However effectively action is taken to make anticipatory adjustments, there will always be a need to make some reasonable adjustments to meet individual needs. See next section: [Implementing a Student Support Plan](#).

See the [Teaching and learning: reasonable adjustments](#) section for more information about inclusive teaching practice. More information in carrying out anticipatory adjustments can be found in the Equality Challenge Unit's Guidance on managing reasonable adjustments in higher education, and Chapter 7 of the Equality Act 2010 Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education.

Inclusive Education

An inclusive approach to education values individual differences, and recognizes the benefits that diverse students and staff bring to the University of Oxford. Inclusive education aims to improve the educational experience of all students, and so enables achievement at equal rates. An inclusive approach goes beyond supporting specific groups through a discrete set of policies and interventions. Instead, teaching, learning and assessment take into account students' varied learning needs from the outset.

More information can be found on our [Accessible and inclusive teaching](#) page, and on the [Centre for Teaching and Learning website](#). The Centre for Teaching and Learning will be launching an online Inclusive Teaching course at the beginning of Michaelmas term 2020.