

Disability, Equality and Diversity Guide

If for any reason you feel that you have personal health issues that affect your options or that you are at a disadvantage in the career planning or job selection process, you can contact us for advice and support. This guide includes the following information:

- Help for students, potential students and graduates with disabilities
- Steps to success for disabled students
- Disclosure of disability
- Disability and career choice: reasonable adjustments
- Further advice and information

Help for students, potential students and graduates with disabilities

Large numbers of disabled students now go on to higher education and the figure has risen steadily in recent years.

The Careers and Employability Service, is committed to equal opportunities and all of our services are available to clients who may have additional requirements due to a disability or combination of disabilities.

The Careers and Employability centre in Guildhall Walk has full wheelchair access and an induction loop is available for clients with hearing impairments. A range of support software is available on our computers.

We are able to provide specific support for students with disabilities in the following ways:

- Individual support with career planning.
- Advice on disclosure of disabilities to employers and education and training providers.
- Advice on requesting reasonable adjustments that may be needed in employment and training.
- Information on recent first career destinations of graduates with disabilities.
- Access to advice and information about specific organisations and details of employers who can provide work and training opportunities for students and graduates with disabilities.
- Links with other University services, for example Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC), Academic Skills (ASK), the Mental Health Service and the Counselling service. Full details of these are to be found on the University's website (www.port.ac.uk).

We provide confidential and impartial advice tailored to individual needs. Students and graduates with disabilities who require our assistance are encouraged to contact us to discuss how we can best help.

Steps to success for students and graduates with disabilities:

Research shows that, although there can be challenges to overcome, disabled graduates can be very successful in their careers after graduation. Indeed, disabled graduates go on to a very wide range of jobs and further study or training.

The following list suggests a few steps that students with disabilities can take to ensure that they are giving themselves the best possible chance of succeeding after completing their course.

- Try to gain as much work experience as possible during your studies, as this will help you in the future. You can start doing this early in your course. We can provide information on volunteering, part time jobs and work experience opportunities that will enable you to contribute to the life of the local community as well as adding to your confidence, skills and knowledge and providing useful evidence for your CV.
- Keep records of any jobs, work experience or volunteering that you do. These will help you when writing CVs and applications and in preparing for job or course interviews.
- Make sure you know about the various individuals and organisations that can help and consult them immediately if help is needed.
- Start networking. It is easy and the Careers and Employability staff can help you.
- Sometimes people may need some assistance, perhaps in the form of reasonable adjustments or making decisions about disclosing a disability to help them succeed. If this is the case, then it is important to seek early help.
- Prepare well in advance – draw up a plan of action for yourself and don't leave everything to the last minute. In particular, make sure you think about any adjustments that may be needed and be prepared to explain this if necessary.

Disclosure:

Deciding on how to disclose a disability can be a complex issue. It is natural that some students may be concerned about telling an employer about a disability when completing applications, writing a CV or going for interviews. It is important to adopt a positive approach and seek help when necessary.

We can help here so if you require any assistance with this, or other matters related to disability, then please contact staff at the Careers and Employability Service.

When applying for any opportunities, preparation is always extremely important. This is especially so when considering beforehand whether and how to disclose a disability. Remember, the provisions of equality legislation can protect people with disabilities.

Reasons in favour of disclosing a disability:

- you might qualify for various forms of help such as financial assistance, practical help like a modified computer or perhaps access to expert support such as occupational therapy;
- many employers have specific equal opportunities policies. These might include, for example, commitments to the 'Two Ticks' disability support initiative. The disability symbol is made up of two ticks and the words 'positive about disabled people'. Employers who use the symbol have signed up

to a specific promise to support disabled job applicants. You can find out more on the Directgov website (www.gov.uk);

- declaring a disability may help you to explain some aspects of your education and work history on your CV;
- it can help you to discuss your disability in a clear and positive manner, building a good working rapport from the outset and can help a recruiter to prepare before an interview;
- very importantly, employers may require you, possibly by law, to inform them if you have a medical condition. In such cases, it is essential to answer all questions fully and honestly, for example, during interviews and when completing medical screening questionnaires. Providing false information could place an applicant at risk of losing their job or having a job offer withdrawn;
- if you have a disability that may have implications for the health and safety of others, it is essential to inform an employer or prospective employer.

Potential reasons against disclosing:

- you might feel that this may affect how you are perceived;
- you may be anxious about discussing your disability with somebody who you do not know.

When to disclose a disability:

If you have made a decision to disclose a disability, the next issue to think about is when and how to do so. This depends on your own circumstances and those of the employer. For example:

When sending a CV and covering letter, you could use the opportunity to clarify any disabilities, again, in a clear, positive and constructive manner, explaining any specific issues such as support needs or medical terms. Explanations in a letter do need to be concise so you could contact the employer directly before applying to discuss your situation further. You could also ask to discuss further, perhaps in the interview, if the CV and letter do not really give adequate space to explain your situation adequately.

If completing paper-based and online application forms, these might contain sections asking you to talk about specific skills (or competencies) or asking you to explain your reasons for applying. It is essential to write about your skills and experience in a positive way, stressing your achievements, and abilities and how they relate to the job. At the interview stage plan ahead by researching the business of the employer and whether this may affect any support needs you may have. The interview can provide a useful way to clarify your situation, emphasise positive aspects of your experience and skills and to clarify any specific needs you may have.

Many employers, especially a lot of larger organisations, use assessment centres as a way of helping them to recruit. Assessment centres may require applicants to participate in a range of activities, including psychometric tests, discussion groups, presentations and group problem-solving tasks.

If you are invited to attend an assessment centre (or asked to complete some tests beforehand) then ask for information about the process involved and assess whether you may need any additional support to enable you to be able to take part successfully in the assessment centre activities.

Disability and career choice: reasonable adjustments:

A student or graduate who declares a disability may be able to ask employers or education and training organisations to make reasonable adjustments to enable them to cope with their jobs, courses of study, induction and training programmes and so on.

It is important to seek advice where necessary and there are numerous organisations that can assist job applicants and employers regarding the sorts of adjustments that can be made. Please contact us if you require advice on relevant organisations that can help.

What sorts of adjustments can you ask for?

The list is potentially very lengthy and it depends to a large extent on the individual person's requirements, the ways in which they can be met and the range of people who can help. These may change on a regular basis.

There is information available that provides useful guidance on issues such as adjustments. This can be obtained from disability support services and government departments.

Before making applications it is important think about, and perhaps discuss with others, what help you might need and how it might be obtained. An employer is generally better able to help if you can provide clear guidance on the types of support you may need.

The following are just a few examples of some of the adjustments that may be provided to help with the needs of disabled people:

- More time in selection tests
- Access to a note taker
- Adapted office space
- Modified access to buildings – for example doorways, stairways and rooms
- Increased length of job interview
- Materials in different formats (such as different coloured backgrounds, larger print and so on)
- Access to specialised software such as mind mapping or text reading
- Opportunities to participate in internship programmes for students with disabilities

It is important to make early enquiries if this sort of help is needed, especially if any applications for funding are required.

Further advice and information:

If you need further information you can contact us for more advice. There are also numerous sources of information and advice that you could use, such as:

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/equality-and-diversity> - TARGETJobs provides guides on key diversity issues including gender, race and disability with advice on how to identify diversity positive employers, decide how and whether to disclose your circumstances, and get an understanding of your rights.

- www.greatwithdisability.com – The website provides practical advice to students as they search and apply for jobs and prepare for the recruitment process. Topics covered include essentials such as disclosing a disability, requesting adjustments, gaps in the CV, lack of work experience etc. The site also lists employers who are 'great with disability' and enables them to share information about the support they offer.
- www.gov.uk – The website provides information on government services and information and includes a section for disabled people.

In addition, whilst you are studying at the University you can contact the Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC), who provide additional support and advice for students with chronic illnesses, disabilities and specific learning difficulties that may impact upon their ability to study at the University. You can find out more by visiting www.port.ac.uk/asdac.

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication at the time of printing. However, this information could be subject to change. Updated February 2018.

Accessibility: If the information in this document is required in a different format, please contact us for assistance. Careers and Employability Service, 28 Guildhall Walk, T: **02392 842684**, W: www.port.ac.uk/careers