TOOLKIT:
BE DISABILITY CONFIDENT ON CAMPUS

myplusstudentsclub.com
The MyPlus Be Disability Confident on Campus Toolkit provides information, resources and guidance to University staff who are supporting students with disabilities as they search for placements, internships and graduate roles.

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Introduction

Disability confidence on campus

Our vision is to ensure that having a disability or long-term health condition doesn’t prevent anyone from having the career that they want to have

The number of students with a disability or long-term health condition attending university continues to increase year on year. Like their non-disabled counterparts, they choose to go to University for a variety of reasons, including to pursue a particular career or to enable them to get a better job than they would otherwise have done.

However, it remains considerably harder for them to find employment upon graduating than for their non-disabled counterparts; and research shows that disabled graduates at all qualification levels are less likely to have obtained full-time employment than non-disabled graduates.

This presents a challenge for both employers, who historically have struggled to engage with this talent pool and Universities who are tasked with ensuring all students, including those who have a disability, are ready for work.

Progressive employers recognise that disability is no barrier to success, and the strengths and skills that have been developed to manage a disability on a day to day basis are readily transferable into the workplace; skills such as time management, resilience and problem solving. However, engagement with this talent pool remains low not least that this group of students lack the confidence to apply to such employers, believing that their disability will rule them out of the running for graduate jobs.

In order to address this issue, careers advisers and employability teams, student support staff and academic staff with a wider employability remit, must all understand the specific challenges facing disabled students as they transition from education to employment, and be in a position to support them with accurate information, resources and advice.

It is our collective responsibility to raise the aspirations of these young people and build their confidence in order that they can maximise their chances of successful employment outcomes when they graduate.

To access the full Toolkit, you can purchase it here’
Understanding disability

Disability and long-term health conditions include, but are not limited to, visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, Asperger’s Syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, dyspraxia, mental health conditions, speech impairment and major illnesses such as cancer, HIV and MS.

A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Commonplace disabilities that students at universities have*:
- A specific learning difficulty (44%)
- Blind or a serious visual impairment (7%)
- Deaf or a serious hearing impairment (7%)
- A physical impairment or mobility issues (9%)
- Mental health condition (4%)
- Social comms / Autistic spectrum disorder (1%)

Concerns of disabled students about ‘being open’:
- Being discriminated against (29%)
- Being seen as a hassle or nuisance (76%)
- Being treated differently in front of other candidates (42%)
- How the information will be used (25%)
- With whom the information will be shared (14%)

**HESA Data **AGCAS: What happens Next? – A report on the first destinations of disabled graduates ***MyPlus: Understanding why students are reluctant to be open with employers about their disability.

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Challenges facing students with disabilities

As they transition from education to employment

Finding a job is challenging for everyone however add in a disability or long-term health condition and it can become even more difficult.

To help support students with disabilities to overcome these challenges, we first need to understand what they are.

The challenges are many and varied however what stands out is that this group of students often lack the confidence to apply to employers, believing that their disability will rule them out of the running for graduate-level jobs. In addition, some students with disabilities have not immersed themselves in student life instead believing that academic achievement alone will make them employable; they therefore lack the employability skills that employers demand.

Disabled students face a number of challenges as they enter the world of work:

Employers look for much more than just good academics. They want rounded individuals; those who have immersed themselves in university life and taken positions of responsibility, developed leadership skills, shown initiative, etc. And this will involve students joining clubs and societies, volunteering, gaining work experience and developing the skills required to successfully navigate recruitment processes.

However, if you lack confidence, combined with the added challenge of managing your disability, getting involved can seem impossible and it will take advice, encouragement and support from stakeholders from across the university to work together to address this.

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Staff Development Session

The five pillars of disability confidence

This first digital training for University staff, delivered as a webinar, is designed to build understanding of the specific challenges facing students with disabilities as they transition from education to employment and be in a position to support them with accurate information, resources and advice.

Disability confidence on campus means ensuring staff have the capability (knowledge, skills and attitude) to be able to support students as they transition from university to employment and be able to provide the expert advice required to enable them to successfully tackle the recruitment process. By building knowledge and skills across the 5 pillars of disability confidence, this training webinar will enable you to confidently coach and mentor students towards successfully achieving their career goals.

Having reminded ourselves how broad the subject of disability is, the webinar moves on to cover the 5 pillars of disability confidence:

• Understanding the employment challenges facing students with disabilities
• My ‘Plus’: identifying your strengths to stand out from the crowd
• The benefits of being open and how to be open
• Applying for a job with a disability & accounting for
• Requesting adjustments

University careers services have a vital role to play in ensuring that disabled graduates have the tools they need to realise their potential and gain employment in roles that fit in with their career plan.

— Lord Shinkwin

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Student skills sessions

Digital training packs

These digital training packs are designed for use by staff with your students and cover the ‘how to’ of job attainment with a disability.

Each interactive training package will equip you with up to date information and the resources to build the confidence and skills of students with disabilities to address the unique challenges they face as they successfully transition from education into employment.

- Disclosure: How to disclose a disability and benefits of doing so
- Identifying strengths: Using a disability to stand out from the crowd
- Accessing support & adjustments during the recruitment process
- Applying with a disability: accounting for differences in your application

Each digital training pack includes:

- A Train the Trainer guide & notes
- A video introduction to the training
- A power point deck of slides

To access the full Toolkit, you can purchase it here’
Disability confident conversation cards

The Conversation Cards are designed for Careers Staff to use with students with disabilities and long-term health conditions to help them overcome some of the challenges they face as they apply for jobs and navigate the recruitment process.

Based on feedback from Careers Staff who advise students with disabilities, students tend to have a clear idea of the topics that they want advice and guidance on. The Conversation Cards can be used to put some structure around these conversations.

The 6 topics covered are:

- The benefits of being open
- How to be open
- Applying for work with a disability
- Requesting Adjustments in the recruitment process
- Communicating strengths
- Accessing disability confident employers

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The benefits of being open

The following explores both the benefits of being open, and the consequences of not informing

Benefits of being open

• Students can request in advance the adjustments / support they need which means that they can demonstrate their full potential at each stage of the application process.

Q: You are the expert of your own condition. What adjustments do you need to demonstrate your ability?

• Students can discuss their disability positively with an employer. In addition to informing an employer that they have a disability, they can talk about the strengths they have gained from managing it.

Q: What skills and strengths have you developed from managing your disability on a day-to-day basis?

• Rather than trying to hide a disability, being open allows students to be themselves throughout the application process and focus on showing the employer what they can do.

Potential consequences of not being open

• Students could lack the adjustments / support they need and miss out on their dream job.

• Making a late request for adjustments could delay the recruitment process. The lack of planning reflects poorly on the student and could affect their relationship with the employer.

• If a student needs adjustments to fulfil the role they have been recruited to do and has not asked for these in advance, they may not be able to perform the role they were recruited to do.

And finally...

Students should ask themselves why they are being open and what do they want an employer to do as a result of the information they share. If they decide to be open, they should also decide how they are going to present themselves and their disability in a positive light.

TIP

If a student informs the employer about their disability after being rejected, the employer is under no obligation to re-interview them.

Recruiters want the best person for the job, so by informing them early they are in a position to make any adjustments needed in order to make a fair and accurate assessment of your ability and potential.

Recruiter at Enterprise Rent-A-Car

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How to be open

A checklist which students can use to put together their ‘openness statement’ and discuss their disability effectively with an employer

What to say – openness statement

1. This is my disability / condition
2. This is the implication for the recruitment process
3. As a consequence, this is what I require

Example:
“I am a wheelchair user. I am unable to walk and use a wheelchair at all times. I require access, a toilet and a parking space.”

Example:
“I have an anxiety disorder. I get nervous particularly in new situations. It will be useful for me to have an orientation visit prior to my interview and for my interviewer to be aware of my condition on the day.”

Example:
“I have dyslexia. I have weak short-term memory and I am unable to write comprehensive notes while I am listening. I will require additional reading time and it will useful for me to have handouts in advance.”

How to be open

A checklist which students can use to put together their ‘openness statement’ and discuss their disability effectively with an employer

The main reason for being open in the recruitment process is to get the support and adjustments required to enable the applicant to demonstrate their full potential. Therefore, students should provide information that will enable recruiters to understand what they need and why, early on so that employers have time to prepare.

Who to speak to and when?

• Students can contact the graduate recruitment team by phone or email. Many employers provide contact information on their careers page.
• Students may choose to discuss adjustments with a recruiter prior to applying or provide details of their disability and the support they require on the application form.
• Students should inform the recruitment team as soon as they receive an invitation to an assessment day or interview.
• If students have received a job offer and are going to need adjustments, they should discuss these prior to the start date.

And finally...

Students should tell the employer only what is relevant in terms of their providing support / implementing adjustments. They should be timely in their communication and be prepared to answer any follow up questions the employer may have about what the student requires. Applicants should supply supporting evidence where appropriate.

We strongly encourage students to be open and upfront about sharing information about a disability on the application form. This will allow us to make any necessary adjustments and ensure a fair recruitment process for all. Once candidates have informed us about their disability we will reach out via email to discuss adjustments – this can be anything from 25% extra time to installing special software for the visually impaired where written tests are involved.

Recruiter at the Bank of England
myplusstudentsclub.com

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