



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

### AGENDA

**11th Meeting, 2016 (Session 5)**

**Thursday 8 December 2016**

The Committee will meet at 9.15 am in the Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2).

1. **Draft Budget Scrutiny 2017-18:** The Committee will take evidence on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2017-18 from—

Dr Jane Balmforth, Conservatoire Counsellor & Disability Adviser, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland;

Carol Baverstock, Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, University of Aberdeen;

Sheila Williams, Director of Student Disability Services, University of Edinburgh;

Ann Duncan, Disability Service Manager, University of Strathclyde;

Kirsty Knox, Assistant Head, Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service, University of the West of Scotland.

2. **Draft Budget Scrutiny 2017-18 (in private):** The Committee will consider the evidence received.
3. **International Human Rights Day 2016:** The Committee will discuss human rights priorities with teachers and students from Thornlie Primary School in Wishaw, North Lanarkshire and Westfield Primary School, West Lothian, to mark International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2016

Claire Menzies  
Clerk to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee  
Room T3.40  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
Tel: 0131 348 5217  
Email: [claire.menzies@parliament.scot](mailto:claire.menzies@parliament.scot)

Public Note: The focus of the Committee's draft budget scrutiny is to examine public policy in the area of disabled people and British Sign Language (BSL) users applying to, and attending, Scottish universities. The public part of this Committee meeting (Item 1) will have BSL interpretation provided for people in the public gallery of Committee Room 2.

You may also watch the public part of the Committee meeting live online on the Parliament TV website [<http://www.scottishparliament.tv/>] To watch the proceedings in English, please select the broadcast feed for Committee Room 2, to watch the proceedings in BSL please select the broadcast feed for the Debating Chamber.

The papers for this meeting are as follows—

**Agenda item 1**

<a href="#"><u>Submission from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Disability Services</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>EHRiC/S5/16/11/1</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Submission from the University of Aberdeen Admissions Department</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>EHRiC/S5/16/11/2</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Submission from the University of Edinburgh Disability Services</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>EHRiC/S5/16/11/3</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Submission for the University of Strathclyde Disability Service</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>EHRiC/S5/16/11/4</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Submission from the University of the West of Scotland Disability services</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>EHRiC/S5/16/11/5</u></a>
PRIVATE PAPER	EHRiC/S5/16/11/6(P)
PRIVATE PAPER	EHRiC/S5/16/11/7(P)

**Submission from The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)**

Below are the responses to the questions asked in the Convenor's letter dated 3 November 2016.

1. How many degree level students report a disability? What proportion of degree level students does this represent?

In the last academic year (2015/2016) 293 students at RCS disclosed a disability. This equates to 28.4% of the total student population.

2. What are the types of impairments reported by degree level students? Can you say what the proportions are for different impairment types among these students?

Please see the table below:

	School of Music		School of DDP&S Drama, dance, production & screen)	
	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
<b>Dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, SpLD</b>	57 (44%)	65 (47%)	63 (46%)	69 (46.6%)
<b>Hearing impairment</b>	3 (2%)	1 (0.7%)	3 (2%)	4* (2.7%)
<b>Visual impairment</b>	2 (1.5%)	3 (2%)	0	0
<b>Mobility impairment</b>	1 (0.8%)	2 (1.5%)	3 (2%)	4 (2.7%)
<b>Asperger Syndrome/ASD</b>	6 (5%)	4 (2.8%)	3 (2%)	5 (3.3%)
<b>Mental health disability</b>	38 (31%)	42 (30%)	42 (31%)	43 (29%)
<b>AD(H)D</b>	3 (3%)	9 (6.5%)	4 (3%)	7 (4.7%)
<b>Unseen disability (e.g. IBS, diabetes, arthritis, epilepsy, asthma)</b>	27 (21%)	37 (26.8%)	26 (19.5%)	35 (23.6%)
<b>Multiple disabilities</b>	11 (8%)	17 (12%)	22 (16.5%)	28 (19%)

3. Does your office play a role in influencing or shaping the admissions policy at your institution to ensure it is inclusive? If so, what does this involve?

Yes, the Counselling & Disability service is part of the Academic Administration and Support Service (AAS) at RCS. AAS also manages admissions and several years ago AAS implemented a system to pass on information on all applicants who had disclosed a disability to the Counsellor & Disability Adviser. All applicants who disclose a disability are contacted and asked if there are any adjustments that would be helpful for the audition/interview.

The admissions outcome statistics are monitored by the Counsellor and Disability Adviser and are included in her annual report which goes to both Schools for a response and ultimately to Academic Board.

4. What specific issues do disabled applicants face when making an application and attempting to take up a place to study at your institution? What role does your office play in supporting students at the point of applying for a place and initially arriving at your institution?

In applying for courses in the School of Music some candidates may face sight reading music. As described above, if this is disclosed at application as an issue, then adjustments are made, for example giving the candidate the music during the warm-up.

Similarly for BA Acting, sight reading may be required. If a candidate contacts the Counsellor & Disability Adviser to explain that this is an issue then the candidate is given longer to prepare this exercise. Different size of font, coloured paper can also be arranged.

For other courses adjustments are made, such as receiving interview questions in advance.

Once an applicant has been offered a place, the Counsellor & Disability Adviser gets in touch to discuss applying for DSA or to discuss any adjustments that may be helpful on the course. If the student has not visited the RCS already, a visit may be arranged.

5. Based on your professional experience, what factors do you think influence a disabled person in deciding to apply to study for a degree and what might prevent them from doing so?

At RCS the courses are mostly very practical with less written work and written assessments than other subjects. This may make the courses attractive to students who are not drawn to subjects with a large written component and who are more practically focused e.g. BA Production Arts and Design and BA Production Technology and Management.

Many disabled students have spoken about how they were discouraged by their school from applying for a music degree at RCS, that it was seen as not admitting disabled people. RCS has worked hard to dispel this impression and emphasise that the RCS is an inclusive institution, interested above all in nurturing talent.

However, schools continue to play a large and important part in influencing where their pupils apply for HE study.

6. To what extent is your institution working to address any barriers to access experienced by disabled people? What specific steps has your institution taken to ensure it is inclusive to disabled students?

As described above, RCS works hard to emphasise that it is open to anyone to apply who has the talent and wants to succeed. Disabled applicants are tracked all the way from application (when they are offered adjustments) through acceptance to starting on their course and drawing up a Learning Agreement, which is where adjustments to their course are agreed.

At Open Days support for disabled applicants and students is included and there is a section on the RCS website describing the support that is available.

Once matriculated, disabled students have a Learning Agreement meeting and the LA is then monitored through Progress Committee at the halfway point of the year to Special Circumstances Board of Examiners at the end of the academic year. These checks enable any emerging issues to be dealt with quickly and efficiently e.g. by reviewing the Learning Agreement and putting more support in place or following up support that has not materialised for some reason or has not been effective.

**Submission from University of Aberdeen**



**Equalities and Human Rights Committee of the Scottish Parliament**

**1. Do you collect any information on whether applicants to degree programmes have a disability? If so, what information do you collect and how do you use it?**

The application for admission for degree programmes provides applicants with the opportunity to disclose a disability and the University of Aberdeen encourages early disclosure. In line with our Admissions Policy, the University makes the reassurance that a disability will not affect the outcome of an application. Early disclosure enables the University to work with applicants to ensure that appropriate support systems are in place to allow students to participate fully in their studies.

The University welcomes applications from disabled applicants and the University aims to make all of the services it provides as accessible as possible. The University's Disability Advisers are the main point of contact for discussing requirements. Each School also has a designated Disability Co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring that any provisions that have been agreed are put in place.

The University has an Admissions Policy beneath which are Guidelines for Admission – covering Undergraduate/PGDE, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research. More information can be found at the links below:-

[www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/admissions-policy.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/admissions-policy.php)

[www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/admissions-policy.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/admissions-policy.php)

[www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/pgr-admissions-policy.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-research/pgr-admissions-policy.php)

Applications for Undergraduate/PGDE study are submitting through UCAS ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) for onward transmission to each of the University choices the applicant is applying to. All applicants to UCAS are asked to state whether they have a disability or special needs. They select the appropriate option from a list and can provide more details to support their needs in a free text box. The response is sent to providers as a code; the applicant does not know the code for their response, the list they select from on UCAS has the disability or special need written in full.

- A No Disability
- B Social/communication impairment such as Asperger's Syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder
- C Blind or a serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses.
- D Deaf or a serious hearing impairment.

- E A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease or epilepsy.
- F Mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder. G A specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia.
- H Physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using arms or using a wheelchair or crutches.
- I Disability , impairment of medical condition that is not listed above. J Two or more impairments and / or disabling medical conditions.

Applicants are advised by UCAS that if they do not wish to answer the question detailing the nature of their disability or special need, they should leave the box blank but make immediate contact with each of the institutions they are submitting applications to.

## **2. Do you take disability into account when processing applications for degree level study?**

Each of our degree areas has an admissions selector, who considers all the applications for that area of study. Selectors are interested in an applicant's academic achievements but they will also take note of the spread of subjects studied and will check for competence in any specific subject required for particular subjects. Selectors take an applicant's personal statement and the Referee's Report into account when making their decision as well as actual or predicted examination grades. Selectors are looking for evidence of knowledge and understanding of a subject, of commitment, motivation and responsibility, and ability to cope with the challenges of a university education.

Admissions Selectors and staff working in Admissions are required to undertake online training established by the University of Aberdeen – examples are Diversity in the Workplace, Diversity in Learning and Teaching and Recruitment & Selection Training.

Applications for admission to all courses are considered without regard to any inappropriate distinction e.g. ethnicity or national origin, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religious or political beliefs, marital status or socio-economic background. Mature students (those who will be 21 or over at the time they start an undergraduate course), and students who have suffered educational hardship or disruption (including students with disabilities), may receive special consideration.

Our aspiration is to make offers of admission to those who have already achieved the published minimum grades for entry or are predicted to achieve them in forthcoming examination results.

**3. Do you provide any specific feedback to disabled applicants who are not offered a place either in relation to their application or the admissions policy in place at this HEI?**

In the event that the University of Aberdeen is unable to make an offer of an admission to an applicant an explanation is provided. Where appropriate, the explanation may outline alternative routes to HEI. This applies to all applicants. All applicants who have participated in an audition or interview (these are in place for Music, Teaching, Medicine and Dentistry), receive detailed feedback if they are unsuccessful, that is linked to the audition / interview, and if appropriate provides guidance on next steps or how to prepare for a future application.

**4. Can you say what percentage of disabled students studying at your institution complete their studies and graduate? How does this rate compare with the competition/graduation rate for non-disabled students at your institution?**

Please find information below. The data relates to our undergraduate population who entered in academic year 2010 and would have been expected to have completed by 2015.

75% of the disabled cohort completed, while 79% of the non-disabled cohort completed.

22% of disabled students withdrew or have interrupted their study, compared to 20% for non-disabled students.

3% of disabled students who commenced in 2010 are still in studies, compared to 1% of non-disabled students.

Category	Size of Population	Completed	Live (Still Studying)	Withdrawn/Interrupted
<b>Total</b>	3268	2549	50	669
<b>Disabled declared</b>	442 (14% of total population)	329 (75%)	15 (3%)	98 (22%)
<b>Non-Disabled</b>	2826 (86% of total population)	2220 (79%)	35 (1%)	571 (20%)

**5. Do you have any views on whether a personal characteristic, such as disability, should be considered in the admissions process, including in the allocation of places on degree programmes?**



The University has robust and equitable admissions procedures, based on all relevant academic and personal circumstances as outlined in the application submitted and/or in subsequent correspondence. Further contextual information, for example that on care leavers, parental education and ethnicity, that is or may become available from UCAS applications, may be used to supplement the overall picture of a candidate. However no single piece of such information will, on its own, be conclusive in an admission decision. The additional information will be useful in terms of ensuring that adequate support is provided to students once they are on the course and will assist the University in ensuring that activities in terms of outreach and widening participation are effective.

**6. Does the Outcome Agreement for your HEI make specific reference to, or include targets for, disabled students? If not, why not? “If the Outcome Agreement does make such reference, can you provide details on the targets it sets? If it does not include targets, why?”**

The University of Aberdeen monitors and sets targets in its Outcome Agreement for the recruitment of students from deprived areas. The University also provides special support to students who come from a care environment and monitor and report on this to the SFC. The University also monitors continuation rates for each protected characteristic group (e.g. disability, gender and BME). The University refers to these monitoring mechanisms in the Outcome Agreement but has not in the past reported on or set individual targets for all of these areas separately as this has not been a requirement. We are pleased that our data indicates that there is no significant difference in the retention rates of those within and outwith the protected characteristic cohorts of disability, gender and BME.

From 2017/18 the University will be reporting specifically on disabled students as part of the SFC’s plan to offer consistent and more granular reports across these areas.

The Outcome Agreement reports on support for disabled staff and training delivered to linemanagers to offers such support, and on the University’s Staff Disability Network. We have also made pledges in our Outcome Agreement around mental health awareness and support.

**7. Can you tell us how many applications to degree programmes your HEI / School received from disabled applicants each year over the last five years? How many of those applications were successful?**

The statistical information is detailed below for the University of Aberdeen and accounts for Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research applications declaring a disability at the time of application. No information has been provided for 2016/2017 as the academic year is not yet complete.

Please note:

*Withdrawn* = applicant withdraws their application

*Rejected* = does not mean an offer of admission has not been issued to the applicant. An applicant can submit more than one application – for example up to 5 through UCAS. So some of their choices could be an offer, and some of their choices might be a reject. The reject data also covers those who received an offer of admission, accepted, but did not meet the terms of the offer. At Postgraduate level, applicants may be asked to provide evidence of achieving exam results but fail to do so, so their offer of admission cannot be confirmed and a reject decision is issued. Currently at PG level, there is no equivalent of the UG scheme through UCAS. UCAS also receive verified exam results from exam boards, negating the need in many cases for applicants to provide copies of their achievements. 2013 = at undergraduate level, the University modified intake in order to comply with SFC population levels.

<b>Academic Entry Year</b>	<b>Number of Applications</b>	<b>Offers</b>	<b>Withdrawn</b>	<b>Rejected</b>
<b>2011 / 2012</b>	1301	715	77	508
<b>2012 / 2013</b>	1386	947	65	355
<b>2013 / 2014</b>	1587	747	89	750
<b>2014 / 2015</b>	1618	1062	83	473
<b>2015 / 2016</b>	1727	1222	86	417

**8. Are there any other issues, or aspects of policy, around widening access for disabled people you wish to highlight to us?**

With regard to our Outcome Agreement and further widening access engagement, the University is seeking to enhance and expand our portfolio of articulation arrangements.

Students who attend a Further Education institution to obtain qualifications for entry to University, including disabled students and widening access students, are possibly placed at a disadvantage with regard to the verification of their exam results.

Currently the SQA provide UCAS with verified exam results – Higher and Advanced Higher – ahead of the release date to the students. These qualifications detail the grade achieved and under embargo are provided by UCAS to Universities. The SQA also release information relating to HNC and HND achievement, but not the full picture. The pass or fail award is detailed, but not the overall Grade. In addition the SQA do not pass to UCAS information relating to National 5 qualifications. The HN graded unit result and the National 5 result for specific degrees are essential and because it is not provided; applicants cannot have their place confirmed at University in advance, unlike students who are studying Highers and Advanced Highers. Universities therefore have to wait until the exam embargo is lifted and make contact directly with the student to obtain the information and request that they provide evidence of achievement. Some National 5 qualifications are essential for entry to particular degrees, such as National 5 Mathematics for teaching. Collectively the Scottish Universities and UCAS have engaged with the SQA for some time to ask

that they re-consider but understand that no change to the current situation is planned.

The University of Aberdeen on an annual basis has a number of Entrance Scholarships available for Home Fees student entering undergraduate degree study. The Scholarships are funded through our Development Trust who work with alumni and others who wish to provide financial support to particular categories of students / entrants.

Our Scholarships recognise academic achievement but are principally linked to financial circumstances. Those applying for the awards provide evidence of household income usually in the form of government agency documentation, including Disability Allowance income – which is either connected to the applicant or to a family member / parent. We are conscious that other government agencies will have access to financial information but without formal information sharing arrangements, Universities do not necessarily have access to this ahead of students arriving and registering – resulting therefore in applicants having to provide the same/similar information to multiple parties.

The University of Aberdeen's Disability Advisers have commented that there are insufficient trained BSL signers/ interpreters in the North East of Scotland and as a result could present as a barrier to a BSL student wishing to pursue HE. Without access to these services the candidate is hugely further disadvantaged. Initiatives to encourage individuals to train as BSL signers / interpreters would be welcomed.

Our Disability Advisers also believe that there is an issue for applicants to HE who are reliant upon the provision of personal care to enable the student to attend University. For example, the provision of support workers to assist with personal care, such as toileting, assistance at lunchtimes and breaks. The University understands these are the responsibilities of local Social Work Departments and therefore continuity of care is essential for the student entering Higher Education. There is an expectation that Social Work Departments are adequately staffed and resourced in order to meet their obligations and to ensure those with a disability do not experience further disadvantage if they choose to enter Higher Education.

**Submission from University of Edinburgh**

1. How many degree level students report a disability?

In academic year 2015/16 3,644 University of Edinburgh students disclosed a disability. This total includes undergraduate, postgraduate taught and post graduate research students.

What proportion of degree students does this represents?

This total represents 10.20% of the total student body at the University of Edinburgh. The most recent statistics from the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) in their "Equality in higher education: statistical report 2015: students" indicates that the Scottish disabled student disclosure rate was 9.3%.

2. What are the types of impairment reported by degree level students?

The required level of detail is best viewed on the following pages of the Student Disability Service's website:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/about/facts-figures>

The numbers of disabled students have increased year on year, both in statistical terms and as a proportion of the total student cohort.

The number of students disclosing a mental health problem has doubled in the last 5 years (in line with the overall UK trend); these students made up 15% of the disabled student population in 2015/16. In addition, we are aware that a number of students who tick the UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) box "unseen" also have mental health problems.

The number of students disclosing that they are on the autistic spectrum has increased by 30% in the last 2-3 years.

Students with mobility issues are under-represented at the University of Edinburgh, with only 2.8% of students in academic year 2015/16 disclosing a mobility impairment, possibly due to physical access challenges.

3. Does your office play a role in influencing or shaping the admissions policy at your institution to ensure that it is inclusive? If so, what does that involve?

The Student Disability Service is involved, on a regular basis, both formally and informally, in discussions with Student Recruitment and Admissions on the University of Edinburgh Policy and Procedure for Applicants with Declared Disabilities, to ensure that our practice is fair and equitable for disabled applicants.

The University strives to treat all students equally and is aware of our responsibilities and anticipatory duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Admission to the University is considered in terms of academic achievement and disability is not considered as part of the selection process.

The University produced a policy relating to the Admission of Disabled Students. Staff from the Student Disability Service were involved in the production of that policy and continue to be involved in the regular review and update of the document: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/imports/fileManager/Policy%20regarding%20applicants%20with%20declared%20disabilities%20-%20March%202014.pdf>

Staff at the Student Disability Service occasionally engage in (non student specific) discussion with Admissions staff in a guidance capacity, if they have any uncertainties about the information which a student has disclosed.

Both the numbers and proportion of disabled students at the university have increased year on year since records began. (See responses to 1 and 2 above).

4. What specific issues do disabled applicants face when making an application and attempting to take up a place to study at your institution?

I am not aware of any issues (which have been drawn to our attention) in terms of making an application. I am aware that reasonable adjustments have been made in the past eg a deaf student was permitted to submit a personal statement via subtitled video.

I understand that a prospective student who used a wheelchair decided NOT to come to the University of Edinburgh because of cobbled streets, the inaccessibility of some buildings and the hills in the city.

What role does your office play in supporting students at the point of applying for a place and initially arriving at your institution?

The Student Disability Service regularly participates in University Open Days and Post Offer Visit Days to advise prospective students and their family and/or carers of our range of resources. We encourage and contact disabled students both pre and post arrival to engage with the service to ensure that appropriate support for them is recommended and put in place at the earliest opportunity. We can engage with students face to face, by email and Skype and will endeavour to make contact at the earliest opportunity.

Due to the fact that some students are not in a position to engage with the service pre-arrival and due to the increasing volume of students seeking support, the start of the academic year is always extremely busy and can result in a number of students having to wait some time before support can be implemented. SDS employs planning and reserves urgent appointment slots to enable Advisory staff to see students as quickly as possible.

5. Based on your professional experience, what factors do you think influence a disabled person in deciding to apply to study for a degree and what might prevent them from doing so?

Disabled students apply to the University of Edinburgh for a range of reasons, academic and otherwise. Anecdotally, we have been informed by several students and their parents that the support provided by the Student Disability Service has been a selling point in their decision to come to Edinburgh.

See points in response 4. The University is striving to enhance provision for disabled students all the time, but we recognise that we still have work to do.

6. To what extent is your institution working to address any barriers to access experienced by disabled people?

The Student Disability Service operates in a context of continuous improvement. The service carries out an annual survey with our students to gauge satisfaction with provision. We also receive feedback from the International Student Barometer (ISB).

In addition, the Service's reports annually to the University's Quality Assurance Committee with quantitative and qualitative data. The Student Disability Service is validated annually, to carry out Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) needs assessments, by the Scottish Government.

SDS annual reports can be accessed here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/about/annual-reports>.

The University is currently conducting an in-depth Disability Review, which is due to report by February 2017. The primary focus is on the physical and environmental estate and on the implementation of recommended learning and teaching support in our individual academic Schools.

7. What specific steps has your institution taken to ensure it is inclusive to disabled students?

The University is committed to the principle of inclusion and has taken a range of positive steps to enhancing our physical and learning environment. The University is currently reviewing its support for disabled students through a panel set up by the Principal, and chaired by the Vice-Principal People and Culture, to consider in particular improvements to the accessibility of the estate and implementation of learning adjustments. The Panel is expected to report in early 2017.

The University implemented an Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy in 2013, which mainstreams 7 areas of support which were previously only recommended for disabled students.

[http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/accessible\\_and\\_inclusive\\_learning\\_policy.pdf](http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/accessible_and_inclusive_learning_policy.pdf)

We are also working on a massive programme (the biggest project of its kind in Europe) to record all lectures, which will begin in 2017/18. This will be an "opt out" policy, aiming to enable 80% of lecture space to record and broadcast lectures. This will facilitate learning for all students with specific advantages for disabled and international students.

The University's Vice Principal (People and Culture) Professor Jane Norman and the Director of the Student Disability Service represent Scottish Universities (via Universities Scotland) and Scottish Heads of Disability Services respectively, on the UK government Department for Education's Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group (DSSLG).

This group has been set up following significant changes to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) for English domiciled students. The DSSLG aims to influence the direction of inclusion and mainstreaming at senior level in all UK Universities.

Sheila Williams, Director, Student Disability Service

Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary (Student Experience)

24/11/16

Please contact Sheila Williams at [Sheila.williams@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Sheila.williams@ed.ac.uk) if any additional detail is required.

This information can be made available in a range of alternative formats if required.





### Submission from University of Strathclyde

The specific questions that the Committee would like your input on are listed below. These are—

How many degree level students report a disability? What proportion of degree students does this represent?

In the 2016/2017 academic year, the University has 941 undergraduate students with a declared disability, equating to 7% of the undergraduate student population.

What are the types of impairment(s) reported by degree level students? Can you say what the proportions are for different impairment types among these students?

Will provide this data separately as it requires further manipulation to ensure accuracy.

Does your office play a role in influencing or shaping the admissions policy at your institution to ensure it is inclusive? If so, what does that involve?

Yes, consulted during admissions policy review process. Section on disabled applicants included in policy:

#### 10. Disabled Applicants

**10.1** In line with our commitment to equality of opportunity, the University is committed to promoting equal opportunities and actively encourages applications from students with disabilities.

**10.2** The University, in accordance with its duties under the Equality Act 2010, does not discriminate against applicants with disabilities during the admissions process. On this basis, and in all cases excluding those described under exceptional circumstances below, the University does not include an applicant's disability within the consideration of their potential to successfully undertake the programme of study.

**10.3** Although there is no obligation for an applicant to disclose a disability, the University encourages applicants to disclose at an early stage in order that discussion around support that may be required, and reasonable adjustments that may be determined, can take place in a timely manner.

**10.4** The Disability Service contacts applicants who disclose a disability or medical condition during the application process in order to commence discussions about reasonable adjustments and support requirements.

**10.5** The Disability Service team is able to engage with applicants who disclose a disability in order to support an applicant's consideration of study choices in terms of any associated support requirements. Staff within the team are therefore available to applicants at early opportunities in the admissions cycle to discuss approaches to support at Strathclyde, and adjustments that could be possible.

**10.6** Academic Selectors do not include the applicant's disability within the consideration of their potential to successfully undertake the programme of study, and the University makes every reasonable effort to accommodate an individual's support needs. In exceptional circumstances, if a Selector has strong concerns about the applicant's ability to undertake the programme due to a disability (i.e. where it may be impossible to make the required adjustments to the academic programme to meet a disabled applicant's needs) or on the basis of Health and Safety Legislation, further discussion with the applicant and the Disability Service may be required prior to an offer being made. The Academic Selector will ensure that advice is sought from the Disability Service in all such instances.

**10.7** Applicants are encouraged to contact the Disability Service at any time during the application process to discuss matters relating to disclosure, support requirements or programme suitability.

**10.8** Applicants who disclose a disability are assured that the information provided is treated sensitively and in accordance with the University's Data Protection policy.

What specific issues do disabled applicants face when making an application and attempting take up a place to study at your institution? What role does your office play in supporting students at the point of applying for a place and initially arriving at your institution?

Disabled applicants may have difficulty meeting course entry criteria, particularly in instances where their reasonable adjustments at school do not fully compensate for the impact that their disability has on their studies/final grades. We would be keen for further consideration to be given to this with a system similar to that applied to students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds- use of contextual data in admissions.

Disabled applicants may also have difficulties meeting particular course entry stipulations e.g. placement abroad which hinders their access.

Disabled applicants may also be restricted by modes of study- they may only be physically able to study part time but their chosen course is only offered full time and/or implications on funding/benefits prohibit part-time study.

Disabled applicants with more complex support requirements may be restricted to applying to university in the area that they currently live as, if they have care support plans through social work, it can be difficult for these to be set up in other council areas. Easier transfer of support plans are essential.

Disabled applicants can be restricted by the support provisions available at particular institutions. Whilst Disabled Students Allowance assists with funding support requirements, there are still significant variations between institutions and this can inform/restrict course and university choice.

The Disability Service offers advice, support and guidance at the course application stage. Needs assessment appointments are allocated from the point of offer for students with disabilities. Students with more complex support requirements can have their needs assessed subsequent to application.

Based on your professional experience, what factors do you think influence a disabled person in deciding to apply to study for a degree and what might prevent them from doing so?

By and large, it is felt that people with disabilities apply for courses they are interested in and believe that they can achieve on. What prevents them from doing so is covered in the previous question.

To what extent is your institution working to address any barriers to access experienced by disabled people? What specific steps has your institution taken to ensure it is inclusive to disabled students?

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- **How many degree level students report a disability? What proportion of degree students does this represent?**

1181 students reported a disability this academic year 2016-17  
This represents 10.38% of the total student population

- **What are the types of impairment(s) reported by degree level students? Can you say what the proportions are for different impairment types among these students?**

Type of disability	Number	Proportion %
Blind / serious visual impairment	18	1.5
Deaf / serious hearing impairment	33	2.8
Disability not listed	103	8.7
Long standing illness	147	12.4
Mental health condition	175	14.8
Multiple disabilities	110	9.3
Physical impairment / mobility	44	3.7
Social / communication impairment	76	6.4
Specific Learning Difficulty	475	40.2

- **Does your office play a role in influencing or shaping the admissions policy at your institution to ensure it is inclusive? If so, what does that involve?**

The Disability Service at UWS does not play any role in influencing or shaping admissions policy. We occasionally act as consultants to advise academic Schools on how best to respond to requests for reasonable adjustments in applications, interviews, auditions etc.

- **What specific issues do disabled applicants face when making an application and attempting take up a place to study at your institution? What role does your office play in supporting students at the point of applying for a place and initially arriving at your institution?**

We don't get involved in applications, however we can meet with prospective students to discuss the support arrangements they may require upon commencing studies at UWS, and begin to gather evidence in order to build a package of support. Some students require support in the early stages of studying at UWS, for example we run a Transition Course for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the weeks prior to session starting. We can also hold orientation sessions for students with visual impairments to ease their navigation around campus.

- **Based on your professional experience, what factors do you think influence a disabled person in deciding to apply to study for a degree and what might prevent them from doing so?**

At UWS we find students attracted to the smaller campuses where they can make contact with a small, dedicated team to arrange their support. Students are keen to find out about facilities, accessibility and the use of technology before making a decision about where to study.

- **To what extent is your institution working to address any barriers to access experienced by disabled people? What specific steps has your institution taken to ensure it is inclusive to disabled students?**

UWS has introduced digital lecture capture to record lectures and other learning events.

We opened a new modern campus in Ayr in 2011 and will soon have a new Lanarkshire campus with modern accessibility features

Assistive software is available on all open-access campus PCs

We run a Transition Programme for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

UWS students can access Silver Cloud, an online CBT programme

We ran Participate, a programme for tackling Social Anxiety

Lecture notes and materials are uploaded to the Virtual Learning Environment

Applicants information sessions are held to give specific information prior to enrolling on a UWS course

Flexible study options are available for students unable to commit to a full-time course of study