

Disability Awareness Survey 2022

Non-Academic Staff Summary of Data and Results

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Non-Academic Staff - Disability Awareness Survey 2022

Summary of Data and Results

Introduction

As part of the review of the University's Disability Action Plan 2019-2022, and to help inform actions for the new Disability Action Plan, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team carried out a short survey of non-academic staff to help gain a better understanding of staff awareness of disability issues and attitudes towards people with disabilities at the University. This took place between 24 February and 11 March 2022.

The survey aims to provide comparative data to gauge changes in staff attitudes from 2017 to 2022 in relation to interacting with people with disabilities.

The survey questionnaire was circulated electronically to all non-academic staff via a global email and one reminder was sent during the survey period. An article was also published on the University's Staff News channel, Insight, on 4 March 2022. 219 responses were received, constituting a response rate of 16%. This was a 10% increase in responses in comparison to the 2017 survey. Despite this, the 16% response rate cannot be considered to be representative of all non-academic staff. However, it does provide an insight into of staff confidence in interacting with disabled people.

Summary of Responses

As some respondents did not complete their questionnaires in full, percentages have been calculated using the total number of responses received for each question (i.e. in some cases this is not 219).

A brief summary of qualitative comments is included for some questions.

Full comments and data are available on request.

Demographics

The survey was totally anonymous. 74.6% (100) of those who responded to the question on gender were female and 23.8% (32) considered themselves to be disabled.

Experience Working With or Supporting Disabled People (n=193)

46% (89) of respondents indicated that they had experience working with or supporting disabled people. The types of experience cited by respondents are summarised below.

Experience of working with or supporting disabled people	Number of staff reporting some experience
Worked with/supporting disabled people	12
Support disabled students / PhD researchers	28
Customers are disabled	2
Volunteer at disability organisation	3
Colleague is disabled	4
Friend / Family member is disabled	4
Previous work experience / career	10

Positive Benefits to having Disabled People in the Working Environment

Staff were asked if they felt there are any positive benefits to having disabled people in the working environment. Their responses were as follows:

Please Select Answer	2022 (n=175)	2017 (n=79)
Yes	70.8%	69.6%
Unsure / Other	4.7%	5.1%
Makes No Difference	24.5%	25.3%

70.8% (124) of respondents felt there were positive benefits to having disabled people in the working environment, whereas 24.5% felt that it made no difference. This suggests that attitudes have become more positive since 2017.

Some respondents provide additional comments about the positive benefits. These highlighted benefits such as enriching the learning environment and being inclusive:

“Disability helps us to see the world differently. Removing barriers for disabled people at work can make the workplace more accessible for everyone, it can improve communication and simplify our working practices.”

“Having a breadth of experiences helps to know how to relate to colleagues in the workplace and how to relate to people in public.”

“Inclusivity helps innovation and helps to create new ideas. Raise awareness of the difficulties people with disabilities may face but can help educate others on new ways of doing things and to nurture a working and learning culture where people feel valued.”

Confidence in Interacting with Disabled People

Staff were asked how confident they feel about interacting with disabled people. In general, respondents were either very confident (38.9%, 68) or quite confident (56.6%, 99) about interacting with disabled people. Only 2.9% (5) of respondents indicated that there were not confident interacting with disabled people.

Please Select Answer	2022 (n=175)	2017 (n=79)
Very Confident	38.9%	31.6%
Quite Confident	56.6%	62%
Not Confident	2.9%	5.1%
Don't Know	1.7%	1.3%

Help and Advice about Disability from within the University

Staff were asked where they would get help and advice about disability from within the University. Their responses were as follows:

Please Select Answer	2022 (n=170)			2017 (n=79)		
	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
Accessibility Advisers (Student Experience & Wellbeing)	82.6%	3.2%	14.2%	88%	5.3%	6.7%
Student Experience & Wellbeing Website	74.3%	5.3%	20.4%	77.9%	10.3%	11.8%
People & Culture (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)	87.7%	2.5%	9.8%	59.1%	12.1%	28.8%
Colleagues	62.9%	11.4%	25.7%	64.8%	15.5%	19.7%
Occupational Health Services	69.6%	6.8%	23.7%	67.2%	11.9%	20.9%

As shown, the majority of staff would get help and advice from either People & Culture (EDI) or Accessibility Advisers (Student Experience & Wellbeing).

The results from the survey indicate a significant increase (28.6%) in staff who seek help and advice from People and Culture (EDI).

This is likely to be due to increased visibility of EDI across the University since 2017 following its relocation to People and Culture, the implementation of the institutional EDI Strategy and Steering Group; the establishment of a disability equality sub-group, the relaunch of the Staff Disability Network; and an enhanced programme of disability training and awareness sessions.

Respondents also referenced 'Other' sources of help and advice. These included:

- Employee Wellbeing; Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU); Staff Disability Network; National Health Service (NHS) website; The Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP); Office for Digital Learning (ODL) guidance (in-person and online); and own research.

Awareness of University Materials to Support Disabled Staff and Students

Staff were asked whether they were aware of specific materials that exist at the University to support disabled staff and students. Their responses were as follows:

Please Select Answer	2022 (n=166)		2017 (n=79)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (NI) 2005 (as amended (SENDO) Staff Guidance Booklet. (SENDO extends protection from disability discrimination to people being educated in Northern Ireland).	51.8%	48.2%	58.2%	41.7%
Disclosure Guidelines for all line managers	42.7%	57.3%	46.8%	53.2%
Developing competence standards guidelines	21.7%	78.3%	25.3%	74.7%
Disability Action Plan	63.2%	36.8%	69.6%	30.4%
Online disability awareness training	95.2%	4.8%	88.6%	11.4%
Staff Protocol for making Reasonable Adjustments	70.5%	29.5%	67.1%	32.9%

As shown, staff awareness of the online disability awareness training has increased by 6.6%. This is not surprising, as the online training module has been promoted regularly through staff news channels. Awareness of the Staff Protocol for making Reasonable Adjustments increased by 3.4%. This is most likely due to the roll-out of a training and awareness programme on the Protocol.

Alternatively, awareness of the Disability Action Plan has decreased by 6.4% and awareness of various guidance documents has also decreased.

At the time of the survey, the University's Disability Action Plan was due to expire, and most actions had been completed. There were no communications regards the Disability Action Plan for a considerable period prior to this survey.

These results highlight the need to promote the new Disability Action Plan and to promote the guidance documents more widely.

Actions to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Staff were asked what actions they thought the University could take to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

All comments are available on request.

A sample of those responses are included below:

“Raise the visibility of disability people in senior leadership positions.”

“Increase awareness of the achievements of current disabled staff and students through Insight and other staff news channels.”

“More awareness raising of the range of disabilities (including those that are hidden). General education/mandatory training for all staff on a more frequent basis. We need to have disability champions in Schools and Departments, and to have a more inclusive teaching curriculum (e.g. lecture capture).”

“Training and awareness promotion, lunchtime lectures on guidance. Better awareness of services and resources available to support people with disabilities.”

“Promote wider knowledge and understanding of the different types of disabilities and how other staff can provide help and support to the individuals.”

“Employ more disabled people.”

“Have more disabled staff and students reflected in the promotional materials including the website. Provide opportunities for disabled staff and students to lead.”

“Promote the DisAbility Network as a space for people with dyslexia as well as a place for people with visual impairments. Create cafe sessions where conversations on issues that matter could take place.”

“The introduction of disability champions in the workplace.”

“Making sure campuses are fully accessible and have changing places facilities. Taking part in JAM card schemes or similar.”

“Staff should have basic training in sign language and there should be hearing loops at counters. Letters and images used in electronic university documents and online should have alt text, so they are accessible to people with screen readers. Videos should also have closed captions, including those used on social media.”

“Embed accessibility into event planning.”

Actions to encourage greater participation of disabled people in University or public life

Staff were asked what actions they thought the University could take to encourage greater participation of disabled people in University or public life.

All comments are available on request.

A sample of those responses are included below:

“Empower disabled people to apply for positions on Boards and Committees.”

“Establish a disability focus group, so that disabled staff and students can be involved in (inform) decision making.”

“Targeted recruitment and use of inclusive imagery; positive action statements; role models; and awareness sessions/training.”

“Greater visibility of disabled people used in promotional materials.”

“I think the University does encourage disabled people to participate in college and public life.”

“Be open and promote that UU is a disability friendly employer.”

“Create the environment both physically and culturally where everyone feels values and included.”

“How about a full time Inclusivity Officer? Separate to Student Well-being Accessibility Advisors, almost like an advocate for disabled students who can offer support and post RAR etc. Perhaps one in each campus.”

“Ring fenced job opportunities Disability sporting opportunities / teams/ groups.”

“I am new to the University but so far from what I have seen the University is quite good at this.”

“Case studies of staff with disabilities to showcase their roles within the University.”

“Each Faculty/Department should have a Disability Officer.”

“Social media campaigns and videos in Student Guides and UU website, profiling positive role models and examples of successful students with disabilities.”

Conclusions

The results of the survey would suggest that, in general, staff have positive attitudes towards disabled people. They believe that there are positive benefits to having disabled people in the working environment, they feel confident about interacting with disabled people, and know where to seek advice and support about disability at the University. However, awareness of existing University guidance varies.

Recommended actions

Based on the results of the survey, the following positive actions could be implemented to address some of the issues identified (and continue to promote positive *attitudes towards disabled people*):

- increase awareness of/publicise the guidance for staff and disabled students, which exists at Ulster University;
- enhance and promote training opportunities on a wide range of topics relating to disability, including awareness sessions on hidden disabilities;
- increase the visibility of disabled staff and students in the University's promotional literature, website and Insight; and
- ensure that the results of this survey are considered in the development of the University's new Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2022-2027 and that the DAP is promoted widely to staff and students.

