

Disability Awareness Survey 2022

Academic Staff Summary of Data and Results

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Ulster University 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 academic staff to help gain a better understanding of staff awareness of disability issues and attitudes towards people with disabilities. 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 disabled people.

The survey questionnaire was circulated electronically to all 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.

149 responses were received, constituting a 11.7% response rate. Although this is still relatively low, it is double the response rate from 2017 (5.8%). While the results cannot be considered to be representative of all academic staff, they do provide a 'snapshot' of academic staff disability awareness of relevant issues in 2022.

Summary of responses

Percentages have been calculated using the total number of responses received for each question. A selection of qualitative comments is included for some questions, to represent the general nature of the comments received. Full comments are available on request.

Where possible, comparisons are made with the results of the 2017 Academic Staff Disability Awareness Survey.

Demographics

55% (67) of the respondents were female. 82.5% (99) of respondents were lecturers and 9% (11) were research staff.

Awareness of legislation

Staff were asked to indicate their level of awareness/understanding of various legislation and internal guidance documents. Their responses were as follows:

Awareness of legislation: Please indicate your level of agreement / understanding of the following statements:	2022 Responses (n=99)			2017 Responses (n=63)		
	% Yes	% No	%Unsure	% Yes	% No	%Unsure
I have heard previously of the Special Education Needs and Disability Order	95%	3%	2%	84%	11%	5%
I have heard previously of the Disability Duties	54%	32%	14%	49%	30%	21%
I have heard previously of competence standards	56%	26%	18%	49%	32%	19%
I am aware of the issues of communication and confidentiality if a student declares a disability to me	92%	3%	5%	91%	3%	6%
I understand what the term 'reasonable adjustment' means in relation to disabled students	92%	3%	5%	87%	3%	10%
I am familiar with guidelines for positive communication and disability language etiquette	73%	15%	12%	76%	14%	10%
I understand the financial support arrangements available for disabled students**	40%	34%	26%	33%	41%	26%
I am eager to try to meet a wide range of student needs	93%	2%	5%	96%	2%	2%
I am aware of the accessibility issues around the use of online material, e.g. Blackboard VLE course content, University websites and web accessible documents	74%	8%	18%	74%	13%	13%
I am aware of accessibility issues around the use of electronic materials, e.g. Word documents, PowerPoint presentations and PDFs	73%	8%	19%	72%	11%	17%

Overall, the results indicate that there has been an increase in academic staff awareness of the legislation and various disability issues since 2017. The greatest increase in awareness is in regard to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (SEND O) at (+11%). A contributing factor may be the increased number of training and awareness sessions for staff on SEND O. This training was delivered three times since 2020, to over 60 staff, by Student Wellbeing colleagues in collaboration with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team.

Positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment (n=94)

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

Do you feel there are any positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment?	2022 responses (n=94)			2017 responses (n=63)		
	Yes	Makes No Difference	Unsure /Other	Yes	Makes No Difference	No
	79 (84%)	7 (7%)	8 (9%)	48 (76%)	10 (16%)	5 (8%)

84% (79) of respondents felt that there are positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment, compared with 76% in 2017. This suggests increased positive attitudes towards having disabled students in the learning environment.

69% (65) respondents described some of the positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment.

A selection of comments are included below:

“I embrace having students from all backgrounds and abilities as so much of our learning is about people's experiences and how we become the people that we do - the more diverse the cohort, the more we all learn. This in the end means improving accessibility in society/employment and all other contexts.”

“Disabled students are an integral part of society and university life. Supporting students with disabilities should be a priority for all staff within university.”

“Ability in all its forms make us human and having a learning environment that embraces all makes us truly a community of learners.”

“To have a more diverse and inclusive environment, to learn to accept and acknowledge differences, to develop respect and positive attitudes towards others.”

“The learning environment is enhanced by having a diverse body of students and staff who can share perspectives from their own viewpoints and life experiences.”

“Helps to raise awareness of the needs of others in the wider student group. Adapting learning resources for students with a disability tends to make it better and more accessible for all our students.”

Recent experience teaching or supporting disabled students (n=93)

80% (74) respondents indicated that they had had recent experience teaching or supporting disabled students.

The types of disability experienced by respondents are summarised below:

Experience of working with students with a specific disability	Number of staff reporting some experience
Mobility / physical disabilities	4
Learning difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD)	9
Deaf / Hearing difficulty	3
Visual impairment	3
Autistic spectrum / Asperger’s syndrome	5
Mental health issues	4
Unseen / ‘Hidden disabilities’	5

Some of the respondents outlined the reasonable adjustments that they had made to accommodate disabled students. These are summarised as follows:

Experience of working with students with a specific disability	Reasonable adjustments made
Mobility / physical disabilities	Assessment room / classroom adjusted Provided rest opportunities
Learning difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD)	Extra time for assessments Multiple choice papers written in ‘dyslexia-friendly’ manner Ensure Reasonable Adjustment Requests (RARs) are embedded, and recommendations are reflected in teaching arrangements. RARs are reasonable adjustments that are made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone’s disability. Breaking down tasks into small manageable goals Ensure that supporting materials include audio, visual and text-based materials; and provide structured support for engaging with text-based materials Preparing exam papers with large script or specific background colour

	<p>Signposted to workshops offering additional help with proofreading and editing</p> <p>Three-way support with student, support worker and lecturer to help with essay structure and content. The student required very specific instructions around each section in terms of word-count and percentage of overall paper</p> <p>Positive and constructive feedback</p>
Deaf / Hearing difficulty	<p>Gave handouts in advance and spoke directly to the student with interpretation via signer</p> <p>Ensured that all videos that were used in teaching sessions had subtitles and transcripts where made available online</p> <p>Position of the lecturer in the room was adjusted to enable the student to fully engage in the lecture</p>
Visual impairment	<p>Physically guided by staff</p> <p>Learning material and delivery of content, as well as assessments adjusted in line with requirements and agreement of the individual</p>
Autistic spectrum / Asperger's syndrome	<p>Use of RARs to accommodate and meet specific needs</p> <p>Provided lecture notes and resources in advance</p> <p>Mentor to write/record notes</p> <p>Additional time to complete online tests</p> <p>Additional technology provided</p>
Mental health issues	<p>Extended deadlines</p> <p>Signposting to Student Wellbeing for support</p> <p>Liaised with the International Student Experience team for counselling support and to identify opportunities for student to meet new friends through international student events, clubs and societies</p> <p>Arranged one-to-one session with the Business Librarian and for extended borrowing rights</p>

Unseen / 'Hidden disabilities'	Advance lecture material Provide recordings of classes after face-to-face lesson Adjustments to assessment environment
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29% (33) of respondents stated that they had experienced difficulties in implementing reasonable adjustments for disabled students. 29 respondents provided details in respect of the difficulties encountered.

A sample of the responses are detailed below:

“Working with the student to ascertain the requirements is critical. Implementing the reasonable adjustment as well as the additional support the student may require in class (a person/scribe/guide dog /time for medical / personal use) Managing this with confidentiality for the student and other students in the cohort. This is not difficult, but the success of the reasonable adjustment is directly linked to the skill of the teacher/lecturer. People need to be trained in how to do this.”

“Sometimes been difficult to set up and implement RARs for different reasons. Close collaboration, good communications and a positive approach by all has helped resolve most issues.”

“Occasionally professional body requirements can cause some conflict with RARs.”

“The main issues I have encountered have been communication and, relatedly, engagement. For example, a student was clearly unable to complete an assignment due to their lack of verbal communication. In conjunction with the course director, I adapted the coursework to provide a more accessible assessment format. There was also increased communication between me, the student, the support worker and course director (than what might normally be provided.) Another challenge has been getting replies to emails. There is not always an obvious solution to this. I tend to send emails in a helpful/non-aggressive tone to encourage communication where there had been engagement issues.”

“Implementing the reasonable adjustments stipulated by student wellbeing requires a lot of additional time and resources from staff which are not factored into workload. Whilst we really want to be able to provide adjustments in the best way possible to allow affected students to succeed as they deserve to, we need more help than currently made available.”

“At times the RAR is unrealistic for some aspects of. professionally regulated course, particularly in relation to skills. The RAR changes are already made in exams office before being discussed by the course director and it leaves the course director in the position of at times been seen as the person blocking

adjustments. Personally I think there should be more discussion with course directors about the potential challenges with some recommended adjustments before these are confirmed in writing.

Programme has professional recognition (n=88)

55% (48) respondents indicated that their programme has professional recognition. Over 80% of these (28) indicated that this has had no effect, or no effect that they are aware of on disabled students. However, 20% (6) indicated that there are issues with disabled students meeting the professional standards (i.e. in terms of intended learning outcomes and/or competence standards) for their courses.

Comments included:

“There is an 80% attendance requirement. This can be difficult for some students given the nature of their disability - appointments etc.”

“Physical disabilities can exclude some students from the programme.”

“Nursing does not always work for all people with a significant physical disability to be included due to the demands of the physical role. However, it can accommodate for many more manageable conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes, hearing impairment).”

“Some of the Law, Accountancy and Built Environment modules I deliver do [present difficulties for disabled students meeting professional standards].”

“Students need to be able to demonstrate high levels of dexterity in order to show competency in technical skills in a dynamic clinical environment and depending upon the disability, this could be challenging.”

Flexibility within the Student Admissions Policy (n=88)

52% (46) of respondents indicated that they were aware of the flexibility within the University’s Student Admissions Policy, which permits alternative methods of assessment to be considered for entry.

However, only 12.5% (11) of these indicated that they had used this aspect of the policy, for example, to consider reasonable adjustments.

Confidence in ability to adapt module content for disabled students (n=87)

In 2022, academic staff were most confident in adapting their module content for students with wheelchair/mobility difficulties; specific learning difficulties (e.g.

dyslexia); and unseen disabilities. The greatest increases in confidence were observed in all three categories, when compared to 2017.

Similar to 2017, staff were least confident in adapting their module content for students with multiple disabilities.

The greatest decrease in confidence was noted for students who are blind / partially sighted (-8%).

How confident are you of your ability to adapt your module content for students with the following disabilities:						
	2022 responses			2017 responses		
Answer Options	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure
Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. dyslexia	83%	11%	6%	70%	6%	24%
Blind/Partially Sighted	33%	50%	17%	41%	26%	32%
Deaf/ Partial Hearing	46%	36%	18%	49%	24%	27%
Wheelchair / Mobility Difficulties	84%	9%	7%	75%	6%	19%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Asperger's Syndrome	48%	31%	21%	44%	21%	35%
Mental Health Difficulties	55%	25%	20%	49%	21%	30%
Unseen Disability e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, Asthma	63%	18%	19%	54%	16%	30%
Multiple Disabilities	21%	39%	40%	23.4%	40.2%	36.4%

Confidence in ability to adapt teaching methods for disabled students (n=83)

Academic staff in 2022 were most confident in adapting their teaching methods for students with specific learning difficulties. This is a significant increase in staff confidence (+17%) since 2017.

Staff were least confident in adapting their teaching methods for students who are blind or partially sighted (41% were 'Not confident').

The greatest increases in confidence were observed for students with Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. dyslexia (+17%); Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Asperger's Syndrome (+10%); and unseen disabilities (+10%).

The greatest decreases in confidence were observed for students with multiple disabilities (-10%) and students who are blind/partially sighted (-5%)

How confident are you of your ability to adapt your teaching methods for students with the following disabilities:						
Answer Options	2022 responses (n=83)			2017 responses (n=63)		
	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure
Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. dyslexia	87%	7%	6%	70%	8%	22%
Blind/Partially Sighted	41%	41%	18%	46%	29%	25%
Deaf/ Partial Hearing	49%	31%	20%	46%	24%	30%
Wheelchair / Mobility Difficulties	80%	12%	8%	75%	5%	20%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Asperger's Syndrome	54%	28%	18%	44%	24%	32%
Mental Health Difficulties	57%	25%	18%	51%	21%	28%
Unseen Disability e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, Asthma	66%	19%	15%	56%	14%	30%
Multiple Disabilities	25%	36%	39%	35%	25%	40%

Confidence in ability to adapt assessment methods for disabled students (n=83)

Compared to 2017, the results indicate an increase in confidence in ability to adapt assessment methods for students with Mental Health Difficulties (+9%) and for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLDs)(+7%).

However, there was a decrease in confidence in adapting assessment methods for students who are blind/partially sighted (-12%) and for students who are blind/partially sighted (-6%).

Similar to 2017, confidence was highest in adapting assessment methods for students with SLDs (77%) and students with Wheelchair/Mobility Difficulties (75%). Staff were least confident in adapting their assessment methods for students with Multiple Disabilities (24%) and for students who are blind / partially sighted (34%).

The greatest increase in confidence was observed for students with Mental Health Difficulties (+9%). The greatest decrease in confidence was noted for students who are Blind / Partially Sighted (-12%).

How confident are you of your ability to adapt your assessment methods for students with the following disabilities:						
Answer Options	2022 responses (n=83)			2017 responses (n=63)		
	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure	% Confident	% Not confident	% Unsure
Specific Learning Difficulties e.g. dyslexia	77%	13%	10%	70%	6%	24%
Blind/Partially Sighted	34%	43%	23%	46%	24%	30%
Deaf/ Partial Hearing	48%	31%	21%	54%	17%	29%
Wheelchair / Mobility Difficulties	75%	14%	11%	73%	6%	21%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder / Asperger's Syndrome	48%	33%	19%	43%	25%	32%
Mental Health Difficulties	60%	24%	16%	51%	19%	30%
Unseen Disability e.g. diabetes	64%	20%	16%	60%	10%	30%
Multiple Disabilities	24%	37%	39%	32%	27%	41%

At what stage in the admissions and /or teaching process would you like to be informed about a prospective disabled student? (n=74)

The majority of respondents stated that they would like to be informed about a prospective disabled student 'as early as possible'. Responses to this question were as follows:

Stage would like to be informed about a prospective disabled student	Number of respondents
As early as possible	14
At start or early in semester/module	10
On application	4
Before teaching commences	10
Prior to or at registration/enrolment	5
Before or at admissions	6
Once student has been accepted	4
When they accept their place	3
Once UU has confirmed their place	1

Support and advice centres (n=80)

The greatest proportions of respondents indicated that they would seek support and advice from colleagues (88%) and Student Experience & Wellbeing (85%). Only 51% of respondents indicated that they would seek support and advice from People and Culture - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (51%). However, compared to 2017 this represents a 23% increase of respondents indicating they would seek support and advice from People and Culture – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Respondents also indicated that they would seek support and advice from other sources such as disability organisations; UUSU; online resources; colleagues in other universities and the Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP).

Where would you seek support and advice from within the University?						
	2022 responses (n=80)			2017 responses (n=63)		
Answer Options	% Yes	% No	% Unsure	% Yes	% No	% Unsure
Student Experience & Wellbeing	85%	5%	10%	78%	5%	17%
People and Culture (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)	51%	23%	26%	28%	36%	36%
Colleagues	89%	4%	7%	86%	5%	9%

Training topics (n=76)

Total percentages for 'Very important' and 'important' across the various training topics are generally greater than those for 2017.

Other training requested included:

- Autism Awareness training
- Mental Health Awareness

In order to identify and prioritise training, please indicate how important input on the following would be to you:								
	2022 responses (n=76)				2017 responses (n=63)			
Answer Options	% Very important	% Important	% Less important	% Not interested	% Very important	% Important	% Less important	% Not interested
Advice on implications of SENDO legislation	47	39	7	7	35	46	16	3
SEUDO and Recruitment	43	35	13	9	25	42	25	8
SEUDO and Programme Design	53	32	9	6	38	38	19	5
Advice on implications of Disability Duties	53	40	3	4	51	35	11	3
Designing Accessible Curricula	59	32	5	4	51	39	10	0
Positive Communication and Disability language Etiquette	50	38	7	5	41	46	13	0
Health and Safety	51	30	13	6	57	25	18	0
Unconscious Bias Awareness	48	25	17	10	-	-	-	-

Information on specific disabilities (n=72)

Compared with 2017, the proportions of respondents who felt that input on specific disabilities was 'Very important' or 'Important' increased in most areas.

The most significant increase (+11%) was for input on Unseen disabilities e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma.

Other comments from respondents included:

"Training on students with pain and fatigue issues."

"Dealing with students who clearly have cognitive impairments and are unable to understand basic concepts."

"Students with a disability whose first language is not English."

Information on specific disabilities

In order to identify and prioritise training, please indicate how important input on specific disabilities would be to you:							
	2022 responses (n=72)				2017 responses (n=63)		
Answer Options	% Very important	% Important	% Less important	% Not interested	% Very important	% Important	% Less important
Specific Learning Difficulties	56%	33%	7%	4%	47%	40%	13%
Blind/ Partially Sighted	57%	35%	5%	3%	32%	52%	16%
Deaf/ partial sighted	56%	38%	4%	2%	35%	51%	14%
Wheelchair/ Mobility Difficulties	42%	31%	21%	6%	23%	47%	30%
Autistic Spectrum Disorder/ Asperger's Syndrome	60%	30%	6%	4%	64%	30%	6%
Mental Health Difficulties	72%	21%	4%	3%	62%	30%	6%
Unseen disability e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma	42%	44%	11%	3%	43%	32%	25%

Importance of input on reasonable adjustments for specific teaching and learning approaches (n=70)

Compared with 2017, greater proportions of respondents felt that input on reasonable adjustments was very/important in all approaches.

The greatest increase in importance was for 'Lectures, seminars and tutorials' (+9%), while there was no change in importance of input on reasonable adjustments for 'Competence standards', which remained at 81% overall.

In order to identify and prioritise training, please indicate how important input on reasonable adjustments for specific teaching and learning approaches would be to you:								
	2022 responses (n=70)				2017 responses (n=63)			
Answer Options	% Very important	% Important	% Less important	% Not interested	% Very important	% Important	% Less important	% Not interested
Lectures, seminars and tutorials	60%	34%	3%	3%	60%	25%	10%	5%
Fieldwork, laboratory, and practical classes	49%	20%	20%	11%	46%	22%	27%	5%
Placement and work-based learning	46%	25%	20%	9%	45%	25%	24%	6%
Using Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment	45%	36%	14%	4%	37%	41%	19%	3%
Creating accessible e-learning content	55%	33%	10%	2%	47%	35%	14%	3%
Competence standards	42%	39%	15%	4%	38%	43%	14%	5%
Disability disclosure and confidentiality	41%	42%	13%	4%	37%	41%	19%	3%

Formats for receiving information (n=70)

Staff were asked in what format they would like to receive information. Their responses were as follows:

In what format would you like to receive information?				
	2022 responses (n=70)		2017 responses(n=63)	
Answer Options	Yes	No	Yes	No
Briefing Sessions/ Workshops	87%	13%	87%	13%
Advice Leaflets	60%	40%	71%	29%
Web Materials	88%	12%	87%	13%

Other formats suggested included: pre-recorded videos; events that facilitated hearing about lived experiences; student-specific guidance and a central 'hub' for guidance.

Comments on the implementation of SENDO legislation at Ulster

Staff were asked about their views on the implementation of the SENDO legislation at Ulster. Responses indicated that awareness of SENDO varies throughout academic staff:

"This was never taught to me when I joined UU. This is concerning. I was taught about SENDO at my other institution. Are all lecturers inducted in SENDO and their responsibilities in this legislation?"

"It seems as if all responsibility for implementing SENDO is left to lecturers/teaching staff. Student support send us the RARs but don't give advice to us (or students) on what specifically we should be doing."

"The SENDO requirements around the provision of subtitles for pre-recorded materials are entirely unrealistic, and I suspect honoured much more frequently in the breach than in the observance."

"You have to start sharing good practice as a way to enhance other's practice, rather than communication the importance of adhering to SENDO."

"I attended a useful workshop on the SENDO legislation."

Comments regarding Ulster's procedures for responding to and supporting staff working with disabled students (n=41)

Staff were asked about their views on Ulster's procedures for responding to and supporting staff working with disabled students. 39% (16) of those who responded felt that the procedures were either excellent or good, which represents an increase of 18% since the 2017 survey. The experience of academic staff is very mixed.

Comments included:

"There is existing support, however, additional support would be welcome, for example, Autism mentors or advocates."

"Student Wellbeing is an excellent source of support for me, but I know some of the staff and feel open to asking them for advice."

"Generally positive but not always clear where to get information/guidance."

"Are there procedures for responding to and supporting staff working with disabled students? I am unaware of them - we contact student support to ask for support but rarely get a response other than repeating what is said in the RAR."

"It is very good at the level of school and faculty, but I am concerned that these responses are being 'dumped' on admin and teaching staff."

"I have no negative comments, but more exposure would be a good thing. There could be more encouragement and reassurance of staff who may feel uncomfortable about disclosing a disability to come forward and ask for help."

"Support is severely lacking. Students are very well supported and reasonable adjustments are put in place, however the implementation of these are not supported appropriately. In addition, staff do not receive adequate training in dealing with various disabilities."

"More support is needed - we need additional staff who can help with preparing learning activities for students with disabilities."

"It is too formal. It would be good if the student welfare website had staff details and contact numbers that are easily accessible on the website. I found it difficult to locate these when I needed them."

Comments regarding Ulster's procedures for responding to and supporting disabled students (n=42)

Staff were asked about their views on Ulster's procedures for responding to and supporting disabled students. 43% (18) respondents felt that the procedures were either excellent or good, which indicates a significant increase in positive responses to this question compared to 2017 (+25%).

Comments included:

"Student wellbeing are excellent."

"Some staff members know nothing about these disabilities (especially, hidden disabilities) and can be very reluctant to support students appropriately."

"I believe the information on reasonable adjustments should be shared in a much more efficient way. The current method is not effective."

"Extremely supportive environment. Really fair."

"In my experience as a lecturer, UU takes great care to support disabled students but there could be more regular and diverse advice to staff on how best to accommodate disabled students in the classroom and individually."

"There is specialist student support available, and I have normally found the student support worker vital in understanding the needs of individual disabled students and how best to support them. I have also had a good experience with the full-time student support officers who are available for advice about individual students and how best to arrange teaching and assessment adjustment."

"We have good practices in place, just a gentle reminder from time to time for a workshop on procedures."

"It could be better if there were extra staff designated to each faculty to help organise and teach the extra teaching requirements."

"I think we are highly student-centred and responsive to declared needs. From an international student perspective, I would have some concerns that lack of disclosure is possibly linked to fear that their visa may be at risk. Staff therefore have to be vigilant and look for signs of support needs such as poor engagement."

"Too disconnected from the academics. Inconsistent approach across faculties."

Comments regarding the implementation of the Disability Action Plan (n=34)

Staff were asked about their views on the implementation of the Disability Action Plan (DAP) at Ulster. Responses indicated that most staff are not aware of its existence.

Comments included:

“I think the DAP needs to be more visible.”

“I am unaware we had one.”

“Very good support for students, poorer support for staff.”

“Not really. I have been supported but it was very difficult when I first joined.”

“The Plan needs to support staff on the ground and not read like a high-level aspiration.”

Comments regarding actions that the University could take to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

Staff were asked about their views on the actions the University could take to better promote positive attitudes towards disabled people. Suggestions ranged from ‘training and awareness sessions’ to ‘increased use of role models/visibility’:

“Mandatory training for staff. Focus on disability in a meaningful way through People & Culture; Athena Swan etc.”

“I was not aware of there being a specific issue within the University. I believe that the issue of discrimination against people with disabilities is societal. In my opinion, the University should (continue to) create a welcoming environment for people with disabilities and support staff with appropriate resource where required.”

“Intersectional initiatives across BAME, LGBT and Disability, for example.”

“Continue to positively represent disabled people in all promotional materials, ensure there is accommodation of their needs at social events as well as in the classroom, encourage study of texts (literature, film, music etc) which feature disabled people.”

“Less photo-ops and more tangible opportunities for disabled people.”

“Ensure that ableism and disability awareness delivered through an EDI framework is a mandatory part of the curriculum and require course validation teams to demonstrate how their programmes address it with their students.”

Comments regarding actions the University could take to encourage greater participation of disabled people in University or public life

Staff were asked about their views on the actions that the University could take to encourage greater participation of disabled people in University or public life. Suggestions ranged from 'ensuring inclusive curricula' to 'showcasing positive success stories/role models':

"More recognition and provision of facilities to support the needs of disabled persons."

"I am quite averse to people being exploited as poster representatives or to tick boxes, so a way to find meaningful long-term change, which really comes from the culture of the University (top-down)."

"Supporting current students, encouraging staff to create and utilise inclusive curricula, using positive stories in marketing."

"Appoint disabled students and staff to all policy and decision-making bodies within the University at all levels from School up to Senate and University committees."

"Ensure the physical spaces are user-friendly for disabled people, support events which are organised by and feature disabled people, promote inclusivity in written invitations to public events etc."

"Ban the word 'normal' from our communications and classrooms. Highlight how the University surpasses the minimum requirements outlined by disability legislation and standards."

"Ensure all staff attend face-to-face disability awareness and etiquette training."

"Require all non-disabled researchers who focus on anything to do with disability to declare as a starting point in their research that they are non-disabled and adhere as a minimum to the social model of disability."

"Champion co-creation of research and teaching with disabled people and their advocacy groups. Stop asking medical academics to do research on disabled people and ensure they do it with them."

"More connections between University events and disabled groups would be positive. How many disabled people have received honorary degrees? How well do we observe and advertise achievements of disabled people?"

"Better access to the buildings, more financial help for disabled students, the targeted recruitment of disabled students, more acceptance of disabled staff, e.g. those with autism or other unseen disabilities."

Key findings:

- Significant experience of working with or supporting disabled students exists and some staff are willing to share this experience;
- 84% of respondents felt that there are positive benefits to having disabled students in the learning environment. These benefits ranged from providing a more diverse and inclusive learning environment, to increasing awareness of disability issues to other students;
- Few (29%, 33) respondents had encountered difficulties in implementing reasonable adjustments for students. In general these difficulties concerned conflicts with professional standards and alternative methods of assessment;
- 80% of the respondents whose courses have professional recognition (28) indicated that this had no effect on disabled students. However, 20% (6) indicated that there are issues with disabled students meeting professional standards (in terms of intended learning outcomes/ competence standards) for their courses;
- Just over half of respondents (52%, 46) are aware that there is flexibility within the University's Student Admissions Policy, which permits alternative methods of assessment to be considered for entry. Only 12.5% (11) of respondents indicated that they had used it. In addition, almost half of respondents indicated that they had heard of competence standards (56%); and
- Just over half of respondents indicated that they had heard previously of the Disability Duties (54%).

In general, the results indicate that, compared with 2017:

- There has been an increase in academic staff awareness of the legislation, particularly in relation to SENDO, and various disability issues since 2017;
- Confidence in ability to adapt **module content** for disabled students increased in regard to students with wheelchair/mobility difficulties (+13%); Specific Learning Difficulties (+9%); and unseen disabilities (+9%);
- Confidence in ability to adapt **teaching methods** for disabled students increased significantly in regard to students with specific learning difficulties (+17%). Staff were least confident in adapting their teaching methods for students who are blind or partially sighted (41% were 'Not confident'); and
- Confidence in ability to adapt **assessment methods** for disabled students increased in regard to students with Mental Health Difficulties (+9%) and for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (+7%). Staff were least confident in

adapting their assessment methods for students with Multiple Disabilities (24%) and for students who are blind / partially sighted (34%).

With regard to advice and support about disability:

- The greatest proportion of respondents indicated that they would seek support and advice from colleagues (88%) and Student Experience & Wellbeing (85%), whilst fewer indicated that they would seek support and advice from People and Culture – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (51%); and
- The majority of staff would prefer information to be provided about a prospective disabled student ‘as early as possible’ or ‘at start or early in the semester/module’.

In relation to training requirements, similar proportions of respondents felt that input was very/important in regard to all options presented, compared with 2017. This was particularly noticeable for ‘SENDO and Recruitment’ (+11%).

Increased proportions of respondents felt that input was very/important concerning all disability types. The most significant increase (+11%) was for input on Unseen disabilities e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma.

The majority of respondents (88%) indicate that they would prefer training and support to be provided through web materials, or as briefing sessions/workshops (87%). 60% indicated that they would prefer advice leaflets.

General comments from respondents indicate that:

- Staff require **more training and support** in relation to SENDO and the implications of this legislation;
- **information** about the University’s Disability Action Plan is not reaching many staff, and that demand for advice on the implications of the Disability Duties has increased; and
- the **support** available to staff and students regarding disability is generally good/excellent at the University, but some **issues remain unresolved** regarding the ability to meet professional standards.

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):

- the survey results (key findings) should be considered in the development of the University’s Disability Action Plan;
- the survey report should be disseminated to all academic staff and to Student Experience & Wellbeing;

- increase visibility of the mandatory Disability Awareness online module and the wider EDI training programme that includes training on specific disability topics, for example, training on SENDO legislation;
- the University's guidance on 'Developing Competence Standards' should be updated and disseminated to all academic staff, to improve awareness that because competence standards are non-discriminatory by design, there is no duty to make reasonable adjustments in respect of the application of a competence standard; and
- the University's Disability Action Plan could be communicated more effectively to staff, to increase awareness and understanding.

