

# UCD Access & Lifelong Learning Placement Planning Guidelines for Students with Disabilities

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## 1. Introduction

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning coordinators supports for students with a disability in UCD. This document offers guidance on how these students might be accommodated when undertaking placements as part of their programme of study in UCD. These guidelines for accommodating students with disabilities on placement are applicable to both professional degree programmes, where students are required to demonstrate particular competencies, and non-professional degree programmes with a placement element. Students with disabilities must meet the same competencies as all other students on the programme. However, in the case of non-professional degree programmes, where it may be very difficult for a student with a disability to complete the placement component, it may be appropriate to replace this element of the course with an alternative or to make significant adjustments to the placement. However, it is preferable for students with disabilities to participate in all elements of the programme where possible.

These guidelines apply to students with a diagnosed disability only – not those with a temporary acquired condition such as a brief illness or a broken limb.

## 2. Policies and Legislation

Under the relevant legislation (The Disability Act 2005, The Equal Status Acts 2000-2008 and The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008) UCD as public body has statutory obligations towards people with disabilities. These obligations include making our buildings and services accessible, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of disability, and doing all that is possible to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. This includes providing special treatment or facilities where without these, it would be impossible or very difficult, for the student to avail of or engage in a particular programme of study.

UCD is not obliged to provide special treatment or facilities when the cost is considered to be more than nominal. However, nominal cost will be determined on the basis of the size and resources available to the University. While an individual School may not have funding for this purpose, given the size of UCD and resources available to the institution as a whole, there are very few situations where this argument could be made.

Students with a disability who are on placement are entitled to Reasonable Accommodations in order to reduce the impact of their disability as they work to achieve the core competencies of their profession.

Unless a reasonable accommodation puts an undue burden on the placement site they are required by law to facilitate the student.

Reasonable Accommodations are designed to assist students to overcome a difficulty experienced as a result of their disability and not to advantage the student in any way.

Reasonable Accommodations should not impact on the integrity of the learning outcomes or required competencies.

### **3. Fitness to Practise**

Students must meet the required competencies of the programme. On many professional degree programmes students must be deemed 'fit to practise'. The Student Fitness to Practise Policy describes fitness to practise as students possessing "the skills, knowledge, health and character necessary to undertake and complete a programme with professional practice, experiential learning or clinical work safely and effectively, fulfilling their responsibilities with their scope of practice in their chosen field". (UCD Student Fitness to Practise Code, section 2)

All students with disabilities should be invited to disclose and invited to enter a formal process through which appropriate Reasonable Accommodations can be negotiated. These Reasonable Accommodations should be under review from the beginning of the placement and if the initial Reasonable Accommodations are deemed to be insufficient then different or additional Reasonable Accommodations should be explored. Only if all potential Reasonable Accommodations have been exhausted and it is deemed that the student is unable to reach the core competencies of the placement should the Fitness to Practice procedures be considered.

#### **UCD Student Fitness to Practise Procedures and Guidelines**

Relevant sections:

##### ***3.2. Student Fitness to Practise and Student Health***

In this context of the policy ill health means long term, untreated or unacknowledged physical or mental health condition that impairs a person's ability to practise without supervision. Good health means that person is capable of safe and effective practice without supervision. It does not mean the absence of any disability or health condition.

##### ***3.3. Student Fitness to Practise and Students with Disabilities***

UCD is committed to equal opportunities and the support of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are welcomed and reasonable accommodation will be made where practicable. However, for some programmes leading to professional qualifications, students must have the ability to perform skilled tasks safely, smoothly and rapidly. Where additional support is necessary, it must be practicable within the current sphere of professional practice. It is therefore possible that, regrettably, some persons otherwise qualified to undertake certain programmes of study may be unable to complete elements of the programme required for professional registration for reason of health or physical ability.

### **4. Supports for Students with Disabilities in UCD**

Students with a disability are encouraged to register with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning in order for them to receive appropriate supports and limit the impact of their disability on their college activities.

Any student who wishes to request a reasonable accommodation on the basis of a disability must first register with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning for disability support and participate in a Needs Assessment. Students are required to provide documentary evidence of a disability as outlined here: <http://www.ucd.ie/openingworlds/ucdaccesscentre/supportsforstudentswithadisability/informationforstudents/>

## UCD Access & Lifelong Learning Placement Planning Guidelines for Students with Disabilities

Any student who discloses a disability should be referred in the first instance to UCD Access & Lifelong Learning in order for the Needs Assessment process to be completed. If this recommendation has not initially been made in writing then it should be followed by a written recommendation. Once a student has disclosed a disability to any member of staff the University is deemed to know and has a responsibility to advise the student on how to seek appropriate support.

If you believe a student may have a disability and they have not disclosed, then you should arrange a meeting with the student to discuss your concerns and offer support. The student should be referred to appropriate support services within in the college and this recommendation should be followed up in writing.

At the Needs Assessment the student and a member of Access & Lifelong Learning Staff will discuss the course requirements with the student and any impact the disability may have on the student's course activities. The student and Needs Assessor will agree on a support plan which will usually include a number of Reasonable Accommodations.

Students who have completed the Needs Assessment process are asked to sign a Code of Practice which includes written permission for Access & Lifelong Learning to disclose their support requirements to their Module Coordinators. Students are made aware that they can refuse to grant permission for their disability to be disclosed to other members of staff but this may result in them not receiving Reasonable Accommodations that require disclosure of information.

Module Coordinators can view information on the academic and exam accommodations required by individual students with a disability on Infohub Classlists. All Module Coordinators have access to this information. Module Coordinators can view this information by following these steps:

- Login to UCD Connect
- Click on Infohub
- Click on My Class Lists

The number of students with a disability taking the module will appear in the 'Students with Disability' column. Click on the digit to see the list of students with a disability and their classroom and exam accommodations.

### Students with Academic or Exam Accommodation requirements for [REDACTED] in 2014/15 Semester 1

Click on the links below to view details of academic and exam accommodations.

[View details for all students](#)

[Send Email](#)

Student No	Name	Date Registered with UCD Access Centre	No of Accommodations		Click To View	Click to send
			Academic	Exam		
[REDACTED]		08 Sep 2014	4	4	Photo	Email
		12 Sep 2014	3	2	Photo	Email
		22 Oct 2014	4	5	Photo	Email
		23 Oct 2014	1		Photo	Email
		11 Sep 2014	2	3	Photo	Email
		20 Oct 2014		2	Photo	Email
		09 Sep 2014		3	2	Photo

Figure 1. Module Class List – Students with a Disability

## 5. Creating a procedure and a roadmap for students with disabilities on placement

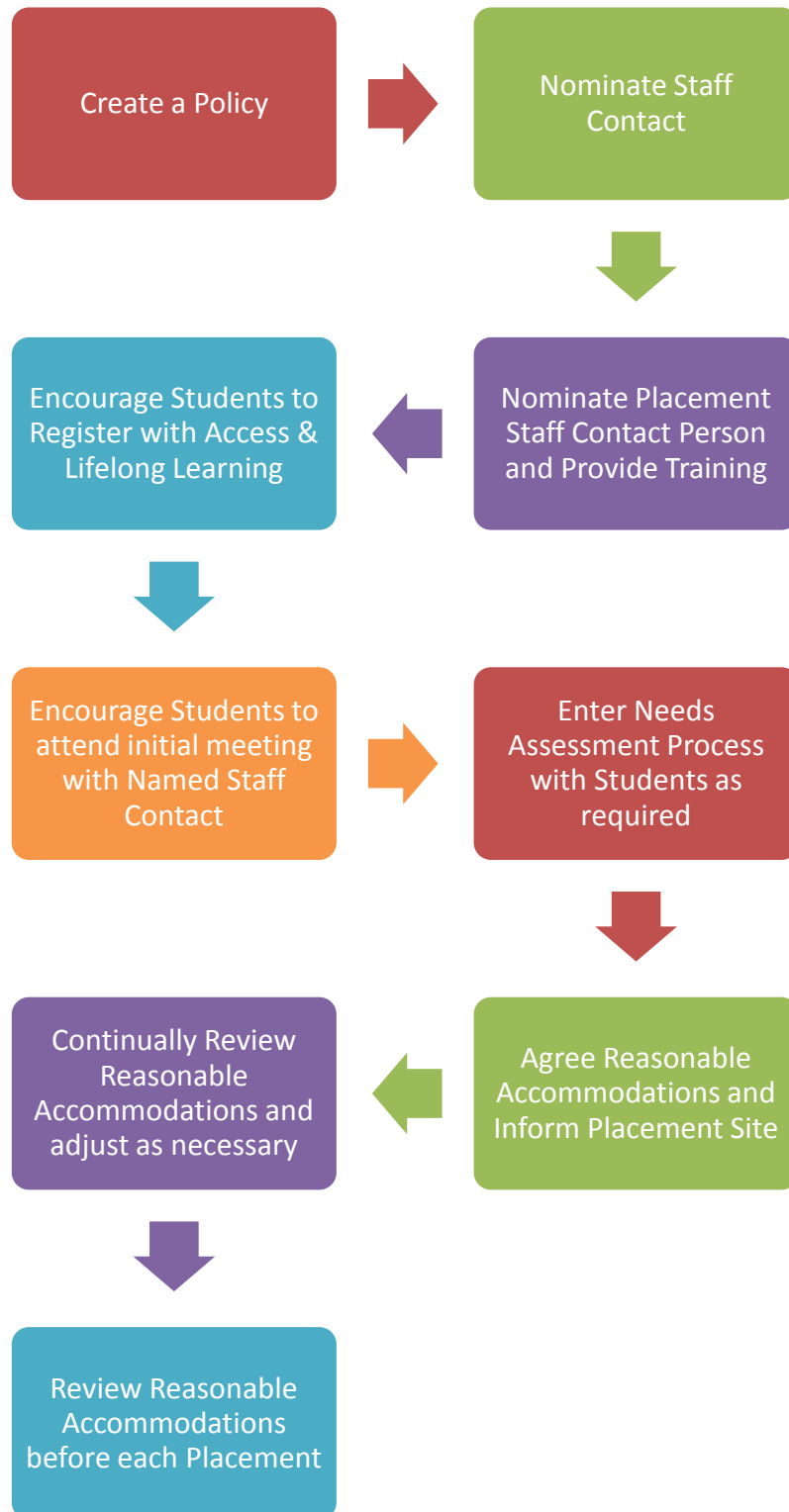


Figure 2: Steps in creating a policy/procedure (see below)

### **Creating a Policy**

- Each UCD School which offers programmes including placements should create a policy on how students should be Reasonably Accommodated on Placement. This should include a procedure and guidelines for Students and Placement Staff. This policy need not be extensive but the policy should include information on:
  - The lines of responsibility and communication
  - Procedures for students to follow

### **Nominate Staff Contact**

- Your policy should include details of which staff role is responsible for carrying out the placement Needs Assessment and following the procedures laid out. This will normally be the Placement Coordinator as it should be a staff member who is very familiar with what the student will be required to do while on placement. This person will also need to be in regular contact with the placement sites.

### **Nominate Placement Staff Contact Person and Provide Training**

- Ideally one staff member at the placement site will be identified as responsible for ensuring that students are receiving their Reasonable Accommodations while on that placement site. If this is not possible then clear lines of responsibility will need to be documented and agreed. The student should be informed who this person is and encouraged to discuss their needs with them if necessary. It will most likely that this person and all staff on placement sites working with students will require training. This training can be provided by UCD Access & Lifelong Learning in collaboration with programme staff (see below).

### **Encourage Students to Register with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning**

- As outlined above if a student requires any Reasonable Accommodations on the grounds of disability then they must register with UCD Access & Lifelong Learning in the first instance. No Reasonable Accommodations should be provided on an ad-hoc basis by Schools or Programmes. Students should be told about the services available from Access & Lifelong Learning and encouraged to register if they have a disability. This information should be introduced in stage one and should appear in programme handbooks etc.

### **Encourage Students to attend initial meeting with Named Staff Contact**

- Students who have registered with Access & Lifelong Learning for Disability Support will appear on the online classlists to which Module Coordinators have access. While it is the student's responsibility to disclose and request Reasonable Accommodations, it is advisable that you contact all students on this list and encourage them to attend an initial meeting to determine if they may require Reasonable Accommodations on placement. Ideally this would be carried out the semester before the placement begins. All other students should also be reminded of the services available from Access & Lifelong Learning and encouraged to register if they have a disability.

### **Enter Needs Assessment Process with Students as required**

- If at the initial meeting it is determined that the student will require Reasonable Accommodations on placement then the student should be invited to attend a Placement Needs Assessment. At this Needs Assessment you should discuss the following:
  - The nature of the placement and tasks the student will be expected to carry out.

- The challenges the student may experience as a result of their disability (this should be student-led and individual to the student).
- Any Reasonable Accommodations that could be put in place to alleviate these challenges.
- The student should sign to agree that their Reasonable Accommodations will be disclosed the placement site (see part 6 below).
- You should address any potential risks to the students or others.

### Agree Reasonable Accommodations and Inform Placement Site

- You should have a formal procedure for how the placement site will be informed of the student’s Reasonable Accommodations. This may include:
  - Directly providing this information to the named placement contact in writing  
Or
  - Providing the student with this letter which they must use to disclose to staff on the placement site. If this procedure is followed it should be clearly communicated to the student to whom it is necessary to disclose.

### Continually Review Reasonable Accommodations and adjust as necessary

- You should devise a way in which the Reasonable Accommodations will be reviewed – this may be done via a weekly meeting or providing a clear line of communication to report any difficulties or problems with the Accommodations.
- Placement staff should also contact UCD staff immediately if an issue arises.

### Review Reasonable Accommodations before each Placement.

- The student should be encouraged to review their Reasonable Accommodations on a regular basis and in particular before beginning a new placement, especially if the nature of the placement changes significantly. You should also be aware that students may wish to remove Reasonable Accommodations later in the programme as they develop new strategies and skills.

## 6. Typical Reasonable Accommodations for Placement

This table outlines some Reasonable Accommodations which may be applicable/useful for some students with particular difficulties or challenges (as listed) on placement. This is not an exhaustive list of accommodations and should not be used as such.

Student difficulty/challenge	Possible Reasonable Accommodations
Attending regular medical appointments	Student will need to provide evidence that they had a medical appointment but should be allowed to attend. Student is responsible for communicating well in advance of appointment times and dates. Student may have to make up additional hours and should be facilitated to do this.
Completing notes or learning new tasks under time pressure	Students should be provided with additional time, especially in the first placements. Students

Student difficulty/challenge	Possible Reasonable Accommodations
	<p>may not require this later in the programme.</p> <p>Students may also be given permission to use a recording device (such as a Livescribe pen) to assist with note taking.</p>
Remembering new terminology	Students should be provided with a glossary of terms before the placement begins.
Difficulty adjusting to new environments	Students should be provided with a pre-placement visit and a map of the site to allow them to acclimatise to the placement environment. They should be encouraged to ask any questions they might have at this stage so concerns can be addressed in advance.
Fatigue	Students may need to have a rest break during placement. Students may also need to have flexibility in shift patterns. This may mean that the student's placement would last longer in order them to complete the required number of hours.
Medication Requirements	Students should be allowed to take time to administer medication, check blood sugar levels etc. and advised of a suitable location to carry this out.
Hearing Impairment	<p>Student should be permitted to use Assistive Technology as required and Sign Language Interpretation if necessary.</p> <p>Staff should be aware that they may need to ensure that information has been communicated clearly and be willing to repeat information if necessary.</p> <p>Providing instructions in writing may also be necessary.</p>
Visual Impairment	<p>Student should be permitted to use Assistive Technology as required e.g. magnification software or devices.</p> <p>Staff should be aware that the student may require material in an alternative format.</p> <p>Written information may need to be provided in an accessible digital format to allow students to use a screen reader.</p>
Anxiety	Students should be made aware of a named person with whom they can discuss concerns while on placement.
Time Management and Organisation	Student may need additional assistance to establish how to manage work load effectively



Student difficulty/challenge	Possible Reasonable Accommodations
	<p>on placement. This may involve providing a detailed timetable or list of tasks with deadlines.</p> <p>Some flexibility on this issue may be required at the early stages of the placement.</p>
Physical Accessibility	<p>Students with significant mobility impairments, such as those who use wheelchairs, will need to attend placements which are sufficiently accessible.</p> <p>School staff should assist with finding an accessibility placement.</p> <p>Manual tasks may need to be reduced or avoided depending on the nature of the student's disability.</p> <p>The student may also require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan for the placement site.</p>

## 7. Disclosure and Confidentiality

The term disclosure is used to refer to a student telling someone about their disability in either the college or placement environment.

There is no necessity to inform staff on placement sites about a student's disability unless the nature of the disability is such that it could cause harm to the student or others. In such cases the University has a duty of care to the individual and/or other staff members.

Students with disabilities should be encouraged to disclose on placement so that any Reasonable Accommodations which may be needed during the course of the placement can be addressed quickly. However, disclosure is a personal decision and students have the right not to disclose on placement, even if they have previously disclosed a disability to the University. Information about a student's disability is considered sensitive personal data and is therefore covered by Data Protection legislation. For this reason no information relating to the students disability may be disclosed to a placement site without the express consent of the student in writing.

Information relating to Reasonable Accommodations should only be provided to those staff members who are responsible for providing or permitting these Accommodations. Therefore, it is not usually necessary to inform all staff on the placement site.

## 8. UCD Access & Lifelong Learning Training and Support

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning will provide support to any School creating/implementing a policy on the provision of Reasonable Accommodations on placements. This support could include:

## UCD Access & Lifelong Learning Placement Planning Guidelines for Students with Disabilities

- Assistance with developing your policy
- Assistance with developing a placement Needs Assessment model
- Taking part in the Needs Assessment process (in initial stages or on an ongoing basis if issues arise)
- We can provide specific training in disability awareness, universal design, assistive technology or any other area within our remit. This training can be provided to UCD staff and/or staff on placement sites. We also run training events throughout the year through HR Learning & Development and UCD Teaching & Learning which any staff member can attend.

UCD Access & Lifelong Learning strive to support UCD staff in their work with students; if you are interested in availing of support or training from UCD Access & Lifelong Learning please email [disability@ucd.ie](mailto:disability@ucd.ie). Please also let us know if you have any questions or suggestions in relation to these guidelines.

## **References and Resources**

[Supporting Nursing and Midwifery Students with a Disability in Clinical Practice: A Resource Guide for Clinical and Academic Staff](#). Edited by Frances Howlin and Phil Halligan.

[Guide for Students with Disabilities on Professional Placement](#). Written by Declan Reilly on behalf of the TCD Disability Service.