

## DISABILITY STATEMENT

### Mission statement

1. The University of Suffolk welcomes and encourages applications from individuals with disabilities recognising the unique academic identities and specific learning needs that each student brings to our diverse community.
2. Our commitment to equality of opportunity and access forms the foundation of our ethos. The University understands that anticipatory and individualised support mechanisms are crucial for all students to reach their full potential. As such, we strive to continually enhance our provisions for students with disabilities.
3. Whether you are an applicant, considering us for your studies, or already a part of our community, this statement aims to address your questions about the University of Suffolk and the support available for disabled students.

### Introduction

4. The University of Suffolk and all UK-based partners adheres to the standards outlined in this statement.
5. Coordinators of individual reasonable adjustments and support arrangements are often known as disability advisers or similar title. There is an adviser based at each campus.
6. To contact or make an appointment with the relevant staff member, please refer to the [contact details](#) for the disability adviser at your place of study.

### What is a disability?

7. The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as: 'a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities'.
8. Examples of disabilities include but are not limited to:
  - Autism Spectrum Conditions
  - Long-term illnesses and health conditions such as Diabetes, Epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis
  - Mental Health conditions such as Anxiety, Depression and OCD
  - Sensory difficulties such as hearing and visual impairments
  - Significant physical and mobility differences
  - Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) such as ADHD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia

## DISCLOSURE

### What do I need to share?

9. There is no statutory duty for students to disclose a disability. We recognise that disclosure can be difficult and so the University aims to create an environment where staff and students feel supported and confident in discussing their individual needs.

10. Disclosing any additional needs will enable the University to advise you of relevant support and to create an individual support plan that will facilitate full participation in your studies. Non-disclosure may limit the support available to you and prevent the University from fulfilling its statutory duty to make reasonable adjustments.

11. We encourage applicants and students to disclose a disability or medical condition diagnosis and provide information about the way in which you experience a disability or medical condition on a day-to-day basis.

12. To be eligible for funding such as, Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA), you will usually be asked to provide evidence of your diagnosis. This may be a letter from a medical professional, Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a diagnostic report. The university will accept a range of evidence and also want to hear from you about your lived experience and how this may translate when studying.

13. If you have a disability but do not require reasonable adjustment for learning, we ask that you nevertheless indicate your disability. Doing so will enable the University to monitor its equality duties and performance and it may be necessary for other purposes such as ensuring safety in an evacuation.

### Who do I tell?

14. There are many opportunities for disclosure:

- At any time during your course, you can contact the disability adviser at your place of study
- On application, you can indicate on the UCAS or University of Suffolk application form
- that you have a disability or additional support need
- Through the online enrolment process, you will be invited to complete the disability /
- learning difficulty fields. You can tick the box requesting an adviser to contact you to
- discuss your requirements and the support we can offer

- Students studying professional health courses may also need to meet the occupational health service representative
- You can speak to your tutor or support staff at any time throughout your course

Please see the relevant [contact details](#) for your campus.

15. Advisers can provide one-to-one meetings for students and applicants, where support arrangements can be discussed. The outcome of these discussions will be recorded on a Reasonable Adjustment Agreement (RAA) or support plan. Advisers can also provide guidance about making applications for funding with your relevant funding body.

16. You may also find it helpful to tell your Personal Academic Coach and/or Course Leader, Placement or employer so that they are aware of ways in which your studies may be affected and reasonable adjustments that support your learning. With your consent, your disability adviser will share your Reasonable Adjustment Agreement with your course team and other relevant departments to implement all support arrangements.

### **What happens to my information?**

17. Information is only shared with others with your expressed consent. For example, when information is shared as part of the Reasonable Adjustment Agreement process, your written consent will be obtained. Please see our [Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments](#) for students for more information.

18. Typical information gathered includes notes or records of meetings, correspondence from parties associated with the Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) process and evidence about the disability or medical condition. All records will be kept securely and only available to immediate members of the Disability and Wellbeing team. We will only use personal information for the purposes we collect it, typically this will be:

- to keep a record of your contact with a service thereby enable continuing work and;
- to provide advice and guidance based on accurate information.

For more information please see the [Student Life Privacy Notice](#).

19. Other examples of occasions where student consent is required is to provide a statement to accompany and Extenuating Circumstances application.

### **Confidentiality and data storage**

20. Advisers store all student records safely and confidentially and will not allow anyone outside the department to access any records without your consent, except when required to do so by law, for example to protect a person's vital interests.

21. We take all reasonable steps to safeguard the security of any information about you that we hold in written or electronic format and destroy all written and electronic records five years after graduation. Disability support records are not stored as part of your academic (students) or personnel (staff) records.

22. We ensure that any statistical information, such as for service evaluation purposes, is produced in an anonymous format so that individuals cannot be identified.

23. If a third party (e.g. family member, friend, partner or healthcare worker) contacts the University we will not disclose any information about you. Advisers may listen to any concerns and may take proportionate action, such as to contact a student to perform a welfare check or to notify the student that a third party has contacted the University. Staff can offer generic information about University processes to a third party or member of the public.

## **PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

### **Applicants**

24. To help make your decision about where to study, we recommend that you research the services and support available both at your prospective University and in the local area. If you attend an open event at the University of Suffolk, Ipswich Campus there will usually be an opportunity for you to meet a member of the Disability and Wellbeing team. You can also arrange an individual visit or meeting with a disability adviser. Alternatively, an individual virtual appointment can be arranged.

25. Applications are usually made via UCAS or in some cases directly through the University of Suffolk application process. Your application will be considered on academic suitability and any discussions you have with disability advisers are treated separately from your application to study.

26. If you require reasonable adjustments for an interview or entry exam, such as extra time, a scribe or a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, please contact the appropriate staff at your site.

27. For courses delivered at any of the sites below please contact the [Admissions Department](#):

- Ipswich
- University of Suffolk at Suffolk New College
- University of Suffolk at West Suffolk College
- University of Suffolk at East Coast College

28. If you are applying for courses at our partner sites please contact the relevant disability officer - [Contact details](#)

29. If you do not wish to declare a disability on your application form but would like an informal discussion about your needs please contact your disability adviser at any time - [contact us](#)

### **Why are you asking for details of my disability?**

30. We ask for this information so we can assess what support you may require and then, with your consent, disability staff will liaise with the respective academic departments and professional services to ensure the necessary support arrangements are put in place at the start of your studies.

31. You may also be eligible for funding which is available through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA), and fund a range of support measures. For example: specialist equipment, assistive technologies and/or non-medical help.

- English students (including those on NHS learning support fund) should apply for DSA through [Student Finance England](#)
- Northern Irish students: [Student Finance NI](#).
- Scottish students: [Students Awards Agency for Scotland \(SAAS\)](#)
- Welsh students: [Student Finance Wales](#)
- NHS bursary funded students should apply via [NHS bursaries](#)

32. DSA application forms can be accessed via the relevant website. Please also note that DSA applications can be made once university offers are received and prior to confirming your firm choice institution. This can later be amended to document your chosen university once you have accepted your offer.

### **Apply for DSA**

33. You can apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) if you live in England and have a disability that affects your ability to study, such as a:

- specific learning difficulty, for example dyslexia or ADHD
- mental health condition, for example anxiety or depression

- physical disability, for example if you have to use crutches, a wheelchair or a special keyboard
- sensory disability, for example if you're visually impaired, deaf or have a hearing impairment
- long-term health condition, for example cancer, chronic heart disease or HIV

You must also:

- be an undergraduate or postgraduate student (including Open University or distance learning)
- qualify for student finance from Student Finance England
- be studying on a course that lasts at least a year

### **Will my application be rejected?**

34. Your course application will be assessed based on academic suitability and any information you provide about your disability will be dealt with sensitively and normally separate to your academic application.

35. Applications are usually made via UCAS or in some cases through the University of Suffolk application process. Decisions are made on academic grounds with agreements made between prospective students and the University to ensure that appropriate support may be provided to enable students to undertake their chosen course of study. It should be noted that some courses which are regulated by external Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), such as Nursing, Midwifery or Social Work, may be unable to admit students who do not meet the requirements of the professional body for their chosen course. Check [our courses](#) for information about entry, or additional requirements.

## **THROUGHOUT YOUR STUDIES**

### **Disclosure**

36. We encourage early disclosure so that support can be put in place early in your programme of studies. In some circumstances, a minimum amount of time may be required to ensure that the support arrangements can be fully implemented and are appropriate for the individual. An example of this is set out in our [Regulations for the Preparation and Conduct of Invigilated Examinations](#), whereby exam concessions usually require at least 3 weeks' notice.

37. Students can also disclose a diagnosis at any point during your studies as we recognise that sometimes personal circumstances change.

38. If you are experiencing a temporary injury or ill-health, it may also be possible to receive temporary adjustments to support your learning. Please discuss this with your Personal Academic Coach (PAC) or Disability Adviser – [Contact details](#).

### **Arranging support**

39. To make an appointment to discuss support please contact your local disability adviser throughout your studies.

40. We also work closely with the Student Centre team who aim to make getting the answer to your question as simple as possible. If you are not sure who to speak to, the knowledgeable team of advisers provide a friendly and responsive service. They aim to deal with the majority of enquiries on the spot or will refer you to a person who can answer your query.

41. You can pop into the Waterfront Building, Ipswich and speak to them in person, use the ask us a question form or contact them via telephone. Tel: 01473 338833 or contact them via telephone. Tel: 01473 338833

## **SERVICES AND SUPPORT**

### **Diagnostic assessment**

42. Screening and full diagnostic assessments are available at the following campuses:

- University of Suffolk, Ipswich
- University of Suffolk at Suffolk New College
- University of Suffolk at West Suffolk College
- University of Suffolk at East Coast College

43. If you are a current student at one of these campuses and think you may have a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD), such as ADHD\*, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia or Dyscalculia, you can apply for a screening, evaluation of need, or full diagnostic assessment.

\*Please note that the University can only provide an educational ADHD diagnosis. This is not a medical diagnosis, and you cannot access medication from your GP using this diagnostic assessment.

44. A screening or evaluation of need can be provided free of charge. This cannot provide a diagnosis, but can identify areas of need that can be supported by reasonable adjustments such as, exam concessions.

45. A full diagnostic assessment meets the relevant professional standards and can provide a diagnosis of a SpLD, if applicable. A full diagnostic assessment is normally required as evidence for an application to Disabled Students' Allowances for SpLD. The University subsidises the cost of these assessments, but asks for a £100 contribution towards the total cost of a full diagnostic assessment.

46. If you are a student at another campus, please speak to your disability adviser about arrangements for screening and assessment - [Contact details](#).

## **Funding**

47. Some students with a disability will be eligible to apply for specialist support and equipment via DSA. Applications can be made any time throughout your studies, if you have at least three months left on your course.

48. Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) can fund a range of support measures, for example: specialist equipment, assistive technologies or non-medical help. DSA application forms can be accessed via the relevant website. If you are not eligible to receive DSA, your Disability Adviser will advise on the support available.

- English students (including those on NHS learning support fund) should apply for DSA through [Student Finance England](#)
- Northern Irish students: [Student Finance NI](#).
- Scottish students: [Students Awards Agency for Scotland](#) (SAAS)
- Welsh students: [Student Finance Wales](#)
- NHS bursary- funded students should apply via [NHS bursaries](#)

DSA application forms can be accessed via the relevant website.

## **Non-medical help (NMH)**

49. Non-medical help (NMH) describes one-to-one human assistance you may be eligible to receive. Some examples of non-medical help support are described below.

### Practical Support Assistance (e.g. Campus, Workshop or Laboratory Assistance)

50. When making a decision on whether a student will be provided with a practical support assistant we will use the following criteria:

- Students with visual impairments that impacts their mobility; NB: Sighted Guides can be provided through DSA
- Students with significant mobility difficulties, e.g. wheelchair user
- Students with difficulty using fine motor control



### Note Taking

51. In addition to manual notetaking, the recording of teaching sessions may be available to enable students to recap and revisit content. Check your campus for the availability of recordings and transcripts – [Contact details](#).

52. The University is supportive of the use of Digital Voice Recorders (DVRs) to audio record taught sessions and takes reasonable steps to support students with this.

53. When making decisions on whether a student will be provided with a human note-taker we will use the following criteria

- Students with sensory impairments which will prevent them from taking notes in lectures because they cannot see or hear the content
- Students with significant mobility issues, especially students with conditions affecting their upper limbs, that will affect their ability to either word process or hand-write notes
- Use of digital strategies, such as access to audio or video recordings, do not meet the need.

### Reader

54. Someone to read aloud course texts and books. This may also be provided in an exam or time constrained assessment setting.

### Study Support Assistance

55. This support typically helps a student in adapting to the academic demands of HE, providing information, helping with time keeping, helping with organisational skills etc. and can be supplemented by practical support e.g. library support, workshop support etc. SSA may not be given in every case. SSA may be given over a smaller time frame or in concentrated periods.

56. When making a decision on whether a student will be provided with a study support assistant, we will use the following criteria:

- Students with a physical or sensory disability and/or a learning difficulty
- Student identifies a need to develop academic skills.

57. The University does not provide personal care or medical assistance that you may need as part of your day-to-day care. Please contact your local authority to discuss appropriate support arrangements.

## PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CARERS

58. UK law (the General Data Protection Regulation) and University policy prohibit the disclosure of an individual's information to a third party. This means that staff members are unable to give any information about a student currently studying at the University to a third party. This includes parents, other family members, friends etc. (All Universities in the UK follow similar guidelines and are bound by the same legislation.)

59. This means that if you make contact with any member of the University and ask about your daughter or son, staff will not be able to divulge any details concerning their academic progress, their wellbeing, their attendance etc. For this reason, we encourage parents and students to keep in regular contact with each other.

60. In general, students are expected to act on their own behalf when dealing with offices and departments within the University, and when requesting services. Parents will not normally be allowed to make requests, or otherwise act on behalf of their daughter/son.

61. In certain exceptional circumstances and with the student's written consent, we may communicate with a third party, if the University deems it is in the interests of those concerned. Please contact your adviser to discuss – [Contact details](#).

62. The University also implements an 'opt-in' system, where we ask students to provide at least one emergency contact and indicate where a contact is a preferred 'Wellbeing Contact'. It is anticipated that the University will use an emergency contact in the majority of cases. However, a Wellbeing Contact will be informed where serious concerns are presented for a student's health, mental health or capacity. More information about how and when the University will communicate with emergency and wellbeing contacts can be found on our [website](#).

## PLACEMENTS

### Where can I get support?

63. Disability Advisers can offer advice and information about support during your placement; however, they may not have specialist knowledge of the placement environment. We advise you use your reasonable adjustments to facilitate a conversation with your course team and placement supervisor / mentors to explore how reasonable adjustments apply in a working or placement environment. Advisors can support these conversations if needed.

64. Part of the Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) process requires applicants to meet with an independent Needs Assessor who will talk to you about all aspects of your course including a placement, where it is a mandatory part of your programme of study. The purpose of this will be identify where funding can support in both the learning and placement environments.

### **Should I disclose my disability to my placement provider?**

65. Your disability adviser will not disclose your disability to placement teams without your consent. However, we would encourage students and applicants to disclosure to ensure that support can be in place in a work setting. In some professions, it is mandatory to disclose a condition which may affect your practice. Please check your professional body regulations for information.

66. Students with reasonable adjustments undertaking practice placements in a health setting, such as Nursing or Midwifery will usually have the opportunity to complete a 'reasonable adjustments pack' with their Personal Academic Coach. When you meet your Personal Academic Coach to discuss adjustments for placement, you will have the opportunity to discuss how your disability may impact on your placement and complete a summary of reasonable adjustments required for practice. This summary can be placed in your practice assessment document for discussion with your mentor or practice educator.

67. Students on professional health courses may be required to meet with occupational health to ensure you can access all appropriate support during your placement.

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

68. All information about University procedures regarding reasonable adjustments and support equally applies to our international students. Please discuss any requirements with your disability adviser – [Contact details](#).

### **Scholarships and financial support**

69. There are a number of UK scholarships and financial support schemes for international students with disabilities and special educational needs. These schemes may be run by UK or international governments, charities or businesses – or by the UK universities, colleges and schools themselves.

70. You can find out more about scholarships and financial support generally [here](#).

## Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs)

71. Some international Higher Education students in England may be entitled to the [Disabled Students' Allowance](#). Please check the eligibility criteria for the respective funding body.

## FEEDBACK OR COMPLAINTS

### Feedback

72. We welcome feedback on the services we provide, including positive experiences and suggestions. You can provide feedback or suggestions in several ways, for example:

- Directly to your campus Disability and Wellbeing Team – [Contact details](#).
- To the Manager/Head of the service – [Contact details](#).
- Current students can also use [SOFIA](#) to provide feedback

73. We evaluate our services annually and may actively ask for feedback.

### Complaints

74. The University of Suffolk expects all staff, students and visitors to be treated with dignity and respect. Any form of harassment or discrimination is unacceptable. Please refer to our [policies](#). If you have a concern or informal complaint about our support, service or your experience, please raise this with either the adviser directly or Manager/Head of the service.

75. If you have a formal complaint this can be made by submitting Student Complaints form as referred to in the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). More information can be found through our [Office for Student Appeal, Complaints and Conduct](#) (OSACC).

76. There are staff available to advise and support those who feel that they are being discriminated against because of a disability. In addition to your advisers, you can speak to your Personal Academic Coach / Course Team, Students' Union and the Office for Student Complaints and Conduct (OSACC). [Email: [OSACC@uos.ac.uk](mailto:OSACC@uos.ac.uk) Tel: 01473 338506]