



**GUIDANCE ON DISABILITY ISSUES IN
PRE-REGISTRATION SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
THERAPY COURSES**

2009

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INTRODUCTION:	4
PRINCIPLES:	6
LEGAL FRAMEWORK: OVERVIEW	7
SHOULD I BECOME A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST?	7
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY ASSISTANTS	8
EXAMPLE 1: DONNA	9
EXAMPLE 2: SUSAN	9
I AM A DISABLED STUDENT ALREADY ON A SLT COURSE:	10
PLACEMENT BASED EDUCATION	10
EXAMPLE 3: JEMMA	11
EXAMPLE 4: CLAIRE	11
EXAMPLE 5: STELLA	11
DISABLED STUDENTS DIAGNOSED DURING THE COURSE:	11
EXAMPLE 7: SAIMA	12
EXAMPLE 7: KWAME	12
GUIDANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:	13
ADMISSIONS	13
PRACTICE BASED LEARNING	14
COMMUNICATION	15
TO DISCLOSE OR NOT TO DISCLOSE?	16
EXAMPLE 6: BETH	16
EXAMPLE 8: NINA	17
REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:	18
HOW TO DETERMINE WHAT IS REASONABLE:	19
EXAMPLE 9: BEN	19
EXAMPLE 10: MIRIAM	20
EXAMPLE 11: SOPHIE	20
HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES:	21
FITNESS TO PRACTISE:	21
CONSIDERATION ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS:	22
SUMMARY	22
REFERENCES	23
APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL OF DEANS	25
APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF TERMS	26
APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE	28

APPENDIX 4: ACKNOWLEDEMENTS29

INTRODUCTION:

- 1 The Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) workforce welcomes individuals from all sections of society to study to join the profession. In particular, these guidelines aim to demonstrate an enabling approach for people with disabilities.
- 2 These guidelines intend to reflect the journey a disabled student may undertake, from the initial application, to being accepted on the course and through to completion of the course.
- 3 These guidelines do not cover a disabled person's career as a Speech & Language Therapist.
- 4 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- 5 For the purposes of the Act:
 - substantial means neither minor nor trivial
 - long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last 12 months
 - normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping
 - a normal day-to-day activity must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the Act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory
- 6 Throughout this document reference is made to 'disabled students' and not 'students with disabilities' in accordance with the recent changes in Disability legislation.
- 7 One in seven of the UK population has a disability¹ and these guidelines are designed to advise prospective and existing disabled students. They are also designed to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Practice Educators and Employers in understanding the needs and promoting opportunities for disabled students to undertake a SLT undergraduate or pre-registration Masters' qualification, to become a Speech and Language Therapists.
- 8 Thus, the guidelines are designed to be used by:
 - Prospective disabled students
 - SLT disabled students
 - HEIs
 - University staff (academic and administrative)

¹ The Equality and Human Rights Commission <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx>

- Clinicians (Clinical Co-ordinators, Practice Educators, Managers)
 - Employers
 - Funders of SLT education in the 4 countries of the UK, i.e. Strategic Health Authorities and others.
 - SLT Assistants/Support Workers
- 9 The RCSLT has the following broad strategic aims and commitments, which relate to this document:
- For the profession to be able to respond to the needs of disabled students aspiring to enter higher education;
 - For the RCSLT to be able to encourage best practice regarding disabled students who are studying on speech and language therapy degrees;
 - For the RCSLT to monitor, understand and respond to the changing external environment regarding disabled students.
- 10 It should be noted that disability and health are separate issues, although they may co-occur and ill health may lead to disability. Both may be short or long term, and each may affect a student's ability to access the curriculum. This separation is stressed in the RCSLT curriculum guidelines currently being drafted (2009).

RCSLT curriculum guidance (draft 2009) extract:

Health requirements
 Applicants should be in sufficiently 'good health' to be able to comply with the course requirements, with reasonable adjustments and support where necessary. Requirements for health screening differ across the UK, and depending upon the demands of the funders of programmes. SLT programme leaders are expected to ensure their admission criteria in relation to health meet the requirements of their local student training commissioners and make arrangements for the health screening of their students accordingly.
 Information concerning health screening and/or inoculations for the SLT programme should be provided in an individual University Prospectus.

Disability
 Physical or sensory disability/learning disability or mental health difficulties do not preclude a student from being accepted on programmes of study, so long as they have the potential to meet the learning outcomes of the programme. HEIs are required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act in respect of providing support and making reasonable adjustments for students with additional needs.

- 11 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires educators, placement providers and employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled individuals to access the curriculum. This includes adjustment in both HEI courses and during practice placements. It is recognised that definitions of disability, approaches to enabling the needs of individuals with disabilities to be met, and legislation, are all subject to change.

- 12 As such, these guidelines are designed to provide clear and robust advice that takes into account the current recommendations of the DDA, Health Professions Council (HPC), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, previously DRC), Council of Deans and other relevant stakeholders, whilst also meeting the needs of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), applicants, students and Employers.

PRINCIPLES:

- 13 Speech and language therapy pre registration programmes should:
- a) Maintain high professional standards for all students alike and not pre-judge the professional competencies of disabled applicants or students.
 - b) Ensure that disabled students are not expected to meet competence standards at application, or at the beginning of courses, that other students are only expected to meet during, or at the end of, their courses.
 - c) Carry out impact assessments of:
 - admission procedures;
 - the provision of occupational health services;
 - processes for allocating and arranging work placements;
 - d) Observe best practice in enabling students to achieve their academic and professional potential within a higher education setting.
 - e) Properly plan work placements for disabled students. Higher education institutions should take steps to ensure that, with the permission of disabled students, sufficient information about adjustments is shared with work placement providers.

The RCSLT Standards for Practice Based Learning state:

2.7. Where a student has a disability, the HEI will be advised by the HEI's disability adviser on how best to meet the placement learning needs of the student. The HEI will inform placement providers of any known issues. This will involve liaison with the student and agreement on disclosure of any issues that would impact on the risk assessment of the student's practice-based learning

- f) Ensure that Occupational Health (OH) services operate in accordance with the HEIs' obligations under the DDA, that they are enabling and focus on reasonable adjustments and not on medical diagnosis.
- g) Ensure that OH services understand that professional responsibility includes a variety of roles and that a student maybe able to undertake some roles and not others.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK: OVERVIEW

- 14 The RCSLT is committed to working in line with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in order to facilitate and empower disabled people to become practising Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs.)
- 15 The DDA states that there are four types of unlawful disability discrimination:
 - a) direct discrimination
 - b) a failure to comply with the duty to make reasonable adjustments
 - c) disability-related discrimination
 - d) victimisation

SHOULD I BECOME A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPIST?

- 16 Having a physical or sensory disability, or mental health difficulties, doesn't prevent a student from being accepted on programmes of study, so long as the student has the potential to meet the learning outcomes of the programme.
- 17 If you're wondering whether speech and language therapy is the career choice for you ask yourself if you:
 - enjoy working with people of all ages
 - can work as part of a team
 - have good listening and communication skills
 - enjoy solving problems
 - have the capacity to study
 - want to be part of a dynamic, rapidly developing profession which draws on science, education and medicine
- 18 It's worth visiting your local speech and language therapy department Your local health service can put you in contact with your nearest speech and language therapy service, which may organise group visits, video presentations or open evenings. Your local careers service can also provide information.
- 19 All speech and language therapists must complete a recognised undergraduate course or postgraduate training and register with the Health Professions Council before being able to practise. The courses combine academic study and practice/clinical placements.
- 20 There are 18 HEIs in the UK offering recognised speech and language therapy courses. Details of all HEIs are available from the RCSLT website: <http://www.rcslt.org/aboutslts/courses>

- 21 Most undergraduate courses require three A-level passes or five Scottish Highers as minimum entry qualifications. Some courses require specific GCSE and A-levels, such as English and biology, so check the entry requirements with the HEI.
- 22 Many courses welcome applications from suitably qualified mature students. Evidence of recent study may be required. If you already have an honours or equivalent degree, you can enter a two-year postgraduate qualifying course.
- 23 Subjects in related fields (for example, psychology, social sciences and linguistics) are often preferred for entry to postgraduate courses.
- 24 The practical components of SLT courses are very important. These may take place in schools, NHS hospitals, community health clinics and domiciliary settings and are designed to develop practical skills in assessing and treating people with communication and swallowing disorders.
- 25 You can apply for undergraduate courses through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). For postgraduate courses, contact the education establishment directly
- 26 If you are considering studying as a Speech and Language Therapist, you should seek out the information supplied by your local HEIs on what their degree course involves, including academic and placement work, and the admission requirements. Each HEI will also provide information about bursaries and funding arrangements, and information about the Disabled Student Allowance for disabled students. HEIs also have equal opportunity policies to ensure that all applicants are treated equitably
- 27 HEIs are required to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act in respect of providing support and making reasonable adjustments for students with additional needs. Disabled students may choose to contact the admissions tutor directly to discuss the adjustments which may need to be made to enable the student to access the curriculum.
- 28 Disabled students are strongly advised to declare these on the UCAS form as early information enables the University to put necessary support in place when a student is accepted onto the course. Students must meet the learning outcomes of the programme, and must be given the opportunity to do so by reasonable adjustments to the learning environment.

Speech and Language Therapy Assistants

- 29 If you are not interested in pursuing a degree qualification at this stage, opportunities also exist to work as Speech and Language Therapy Assistants or Bilingual co-workers.
- 30 They work with qualified therapists to:
 - support clients to develop communication skills
 - develop and prepare therapy materials.
- 31 There are no formal educational or age requirements, although relevant skills, experience or qualifications from other areas can be beneficial. Training is often given on the job and you may have the chance to complete an NVQ

or BTEC qualification, or a foundation degree course. RCSLT has produced guidelines on the Education & Training of Assistant/Support Workers which is available from the RCSLT website.

Example 1: Donna

Donna found it necessary to leave her previous career as a hairdresser because she has a progressive slow-developing muscular condition which means that she is unable to stand or sit for long periods, without severe fatigue and muscle cramps. She had investigated the range of work undertaken by speech and language therapists and was working towards the necessary academic qualifications to apply for a place at the University of X as she needed to remain in the area in which she currently lived to maintain contact with her doctor.

She emailed and had an advisory interview to discuss her application with the admissions tutor, who was able to confirm that in lectures adjustments could be made to enable Donna to sit so that she could move in and out of a room discretely if she needed to do so, and that specially designed seating and table would be provided should these be necessary. In addition, it was possible during examinations, that Donna could have rest breaks and additional time if needed. Placements could also be arranged which took account of her physical needs, and Donna would be supported to meet the learning outcomes for all elements of the course.

Donna decided to apply for SLT courses at a number of HEIs, emphasising the communication skills she had gained in her previous employment, in addition to her academic qualifications, and declaring her disability. She was successful in gaining offers for all of these, and accepted the place at University X.

Example 2: Susan

Susan was accepted onto an SLT course without declaring any disability. When she arrived at the University she reported to her tutor that she had a hearing impairment in her left ear, and relied on a hearing aid, but that this had caused her no difficulties in school. She was advised to seek a personal learning plan from the University's Disability Support Service, which recommended lecturing staff to:

- Arrange the room to facilitate communication
- Use the microphone where appropriate
- Ensure important references and sources are on the board
- Face the class when speaking
- Obtain transcription for un-subtitled videos where possible
- Permit the student to audio record taught classes
- Provide access to lecturers' handouts/powerpoint slides before the lecture
- Provide transcripts of visiting lecturers' handouts/powerpoint slides where possible

Discussion with the learning support team and the student resulted in the requirement for video transcription being withdrawn as the films in question were used for phonetic and linguistic transcription of communication disorders and as

such were necessary to fulfil the competency requirements of the course. All other requirements were put in place.

I AM A DISABLED STUDENT ALREADY ON A SLT COURSE:

- 32 The HEI has a duty to you as a disabled student, under the Disability Discrimination Act provisions, to ensure that you are given support and that reasonable adjustments are put in place in order to enable you to pursue your studies. You will still be required to meet the learning outcomes in order to progress, as the Health Professions Council requires all graduates who apply for entry to the register to be able to adhere to its Standards of Proficiency.
- 33 The reasonable adjustments outlined in any Personal Learning Plan (PLP), or equivalent, shouldn't affect the standards required to meet the learning outcomes of any given programme of study. Additionally, standards set by the HPC & the RCSLT may override Personal Learning Plan recommendations.
- 34 It does mean that, taking each student's individual learning needs into consideration, a Personal Learning Plan is written with reasonable adjustments which are required in order to enable the student to access all aspects of the curriculum.
- 35 Disabled students are expected to take responsibility towards their learning and managing their expectations. Adjustments may be made to the following:
 - The way in which theoretical information is presented, for example in large font for a student with visual impairments,
 - prior access to handouts for students with dyslexia,
 - or audio recording lectures for students with hearing impairment
 - assessments and examinations, for example with extended deadlines,
 - the ability to use a word processor rather than hand write exam scripts,
 - alternative forms of assessment so long as these are equitable for all students and meet the learning outcomes of the programme.

Placement based education

- 36 There should normally be a pre-placement discussion for any disabled student to establish and negotiate any necessary changes to the placement for example, regular breaks or extended time to write up case notes.
- 37 In order to ensure that any modifications required on placement may be made, guidelines should also be given to placement educators on the important issues relative to the student. This is especially important in SLT as the profession works in many different environments, from large hospitals to individuals' homes.

- 38 Placement providers are able to make reasonable adjustments to support individual students, and these are negotiated with the HEI to allow for a balance between the needs of the student and the needs of individual patients.

Example 3: Jemma

Jemma has a rare skin condition resulting in painful blisters when shoes rub on her feet and she needs to wear open toed shoes. Approval to do so was sought from her placement, where staff are normally required to wear closed shoes on hospital wards. Her placement timetable was adjusted to enable her to have access to facilities to cool her feet on arrival; move around briefly between patients to alleviate discomfort and sufficient time during the placement time to get from one hospital ward to another.

Example 4: Claire

Claire has depression and her medication makes her feel less alert in the mornings. The placement educator agreed for clinical discussions to be kept to the afternoons, after the affects of her medication had worn off.

Example 5: Stella

Stella has chronic fatigue syndrome, and as well as taking regular breaks during the working day, it was agreed that her working day would be shortened.

- 39 Disabled students are strongly recommended to familiarise themselves with the available support within the University and also to take advantage of all the support on offer both by their course team and also the central HEI services.
- 40 However some students aren't always aware of the help available until situations deteriorate significantly. HEIs should ensure disabled students are familiar from day one of the course of the possible support and resources available to them.

DISABLED STUDENTS DIAGNOSED DURING THE COURSE:

- 41 Some students who enter a programme do not have diagnoses of disabilities, but find during the programme that a disability is suspected. Within SLT programmes, a common late diagnosis is for dyslexia, which becomes evident when students are working with a high level of linguistic complexity, especially in the disciplines of phonetics, linguistics and communication disorders.
- 42 As with students who already have a declared disability on entry to a course, once a disability is declared, the HEI has a duty to the student, under the Disability Discrimination Act, to ensure that support and that reasonable

adjustments are put in place in order to enable the student to pursue their studies.

- 43 The student is still required to meet the learning outcomes in order to progress. Thus, the reasonable adjustments outlined in any Personal Learning Plan should not affect the standards required to meet learning outcomes of any given programme of study. Additionally, standards set by the statutory and professional body (HPC & the RCSLT) may override Personal Learning Plan recommendations.
- 44 It *does* mean that, taking each student's individual learning needs into consideration, a Personal Learning Plan is written with any reasonable adjustments which are required to enable the student to access all aspects of the curriculum.
- 45 It is essential that all parties are in agreement with any adjustments and/or resources which are available.

Example 7: Saima

Saima had completed year 1 successfully, showing flair in all her studies, although her tutors had routinely commented on spelling and grammatical errors and writing style in her assessments and especially exams. In year 2, she excelled in statistics and biological sciences, but found the clinical preparation and phonetics a much greater challenge than she had anticipated. She was advised to seek student support, but was not keen to do this, citing time pressures as reasons for not seeking help. She passed all the coursework well, although she reported that this seemed to take far longer than her peers. She also passed the examinations, but only gained a bare pass in phonetics and linguistics. As a result of this, she did decide to see student services. Over the summer she was diagnosed with mild dyslexia and along with a Personal Learning Plan she was offered study support, in the form of a 'study buddy' which she accessed throughout her 3rd and final year. With the study support and additional time for assessments and examinations she was able to develop and use strategies to achieve a high level of success. Saima's work during the final year demonstrated her exceptional ability, which had been masked by the dyslexia and she graduated successfully.

Example 7: Kwame

Kwame had succeeded well in year 2 and entered year 3 confident in his academic and clinical skills. During the year, however, he reported increasing lethargy and general feelings of ill health, his grades dropped catastrophically and he failed every assessment and examination. He sought medical help throughout the year and was eventually diagnosed with a recurrence of childhood epilepsy, characterised by night time seizures.

Kwame submitted this evidence and requested the opportunity to take a year out to stabilise his health and then sit year 3 as a first sit. This was agreed and he was also advised to get a Personal Learning Plan so that the course team could

support his learning. Kwame returned as arranged, his Personal Learning Plan suggested that staff and clinical educators be aware of potential drowsiness, as a result of his drug regime and arrangements for rest should be made if this proved necessary. Also it was noted that additional time for assessments should be offered if required. This was put into place, although Kwame only occasionally found it necessary to request that these arrangements be applied. He passed years 3, and 4, successfully gaining his degree.

GUIDANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

- 46 There is a wide range of guidance on disability legislation which is listed in the reference list at the end of this document.
- 47 The RCSLT wishes to encourage disabled individuals to aspire to join the profession, and to encourage HEI staff to be inclusive in their approach to disabled students.
- 48 Staff should adhere to any Personal Learning Plan, and also ensure that they do not discriminate against particular students through their actions or omission. This requires staff to have opportunities to reflect on their practice and attitude toward disability and challenge the basis of these attitudes and practice.
- 49 Staff are governed by the legislation and also the University policies and procedures. Staff should be familiar with these with regard to disabled students.
- 50 Academic staff should be open and available to students regardless of any disabilities, and should observe the same approach to students as to clients in terms of accepting and respecting them. This is also stated in the RCSLT's guidance, Communicating Quality 3, 1.6 Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, as well as HPC disability guidance.
- 51 Academic staff should be encouraged to undertake disability awareness training and this culture should be embedded and demonstrated within each department/faculty.

Admissions

- 52 The RCSLT Guidance for Higher Education Institutions offering or seeking to offer programmes in Speech and Language Therapy in the UK (Draft 2009) suggests good practice in admissions and progression management of students, including disabled students.
- 53 In particular, the RCSLT recommends a welcoming approach which encourages all enquirers and applicants to feel confident that they are being considered fairly. Processes should be scrutinised to ensure that applicants and students are treated in a manner which is both fair and seen to be fair.

- 54 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) was extended to education in September 2002 following amendments introduced by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. Most recent is the DDA (2005) which includes the Disability Equality Duty. This legislation aims to ensure that disabled people have equal opportunities to benefit from, and contribute to, the learning and services available in higher education institutions.
- 55 The flow chart which appends the Council of Deans (2008) guidance (Appendix 1), while not exactly parallel with typical SLT practice, is recommended as a model of good practice.

Practice Based Learning

- 56 The needs of disabled students must be addressed through effective pre-Practice experience planning and monitoring so that they are able to demonstrate the required professional standards as set out by the RCSLT National Standards for Practice Based Learning and HPC Standards of Proficiency.
- 57 In relation to practice experiences, it is essential that academic and practice partners discuss how best the requirements of DDA, QAA, and HPC guidance can be met through making 'reasonable adjustments' for individual students. This can best be achieved through proactive pre-practice experience planning, monitoring and reviewing, effective communication and partnership working.
- 58 Where possible, practice experiences for disabled students should be organised as far in advance as possible. Practice experience should not be changed at the last minute as this does not leave students or practice staff time to prepare. In reality this may not be avoidable, however, it is essential that the HEI has robust communication channels to ensure minimum disruption to the student.
- 59 Disabled students should be encouraged to seek a pre-placement meeting at their HEI as they may lack workplace knowledge to anticipate how their disability might impact during the placement. Such a meeting provides the opportunity for disabled students to voice any concerns related to forthcoming placements.
- 60 For example, a student with depression may feel that certain client groups may be more difficult to work with on an emotional level compared to others. This may be accommodated so long as the student is still able to demonstrate the ability to meet the required learning outcomes.
- 61 Discussion would normally include consideration of the *impact* of the disability in general and specific areas. These might include issues such as mobility and access, physical and mental fatigue, effects of medication, software/writing/dexterity, organisation/planning, health and safety, environmental factors and whether or not the placement should be deferred.
- 62 Discussion enables exploration of what might be done to manage issues and by whom (HEI, student and placement provider).

The DRC (2004b) Code of Practice states:

"It would be reasonable to expect the sending organisation and the Practice experience provider to cooperate in order to ensure that appropriate adjustments are identified and made. It is good practice for a Practice experience provider to ask a disabled person about reasonable adjustments before the Practice experience begins, and to allow him/her to visit the workplace in advance to see how his/her needs can be addressed. Once a particular adjustment has been identified, it would be reasonable for the sending organisation and the Practice experience provider to discuss its implementation, bearing in mind their respective obligations under the Act".
(DRC 2004b sect. 9.49).

Communication

- 63 All forms of communication should be frequent, clear, ongoing and most importantly, a two way process, with the student involved at every stage.
- 64 The disabled student should be aware of who the right person is to approach should there be any dispute or concerns regarding any aspect of the course.
- 65 Confidentiality is a pre requisite and any discussions should be formalised and duly recorded in the appropriate way.
- 66 Clear and concise communication can also help build the confidence of a disabled student, by enabling them to easily talk about their specific requirements to potential employers.
- 67 HEIs should encourage an open door policy for all students.

TO DISCLOSE OR NOT TO DISCLOSE?

- 68 Disabled students in Higher Education have the right to choose whether or not to disclose information on their disability. In making the decision about disclosure, individuals weigh up anticipated benefits against potential losses, therefore a supportive environment is central.
- 69 Creating disability-friendly studying and working environments helps increase people's confidence to disclose. Features of such environments could include having clearly articulated and disseminated policies on support for disabled people.
- 70 Whilst employers are required to make 'reasonable' adjustments, these can best be met by shared responsibility, that is, by the student taking responsibility for what information is disclosed and determining with whom it may be shared. The student thereby takes responsibility for optimising their potential on placement and this prepares them for the future working environment. This process fosters transparency.
- 71 It is not necessary for a student to declare their disability by its label. Instead, what is more relevant to both the HEI and Placement Provider, is the impact of that disability. For Placement Providers, this may provide a better understanding of the impact of the disability for that individual and reasons for possible variable performance during the placement.
- 72 Some HEIs require students to sign a summary of the pre-placement meeting, deciding what information shall be passed on to the placement provider, and what information is left out.
- 73 The student has control over what information is passed on to the placement provider and has a copy themselves. This copy allows the student to feel confident with the information the placement provider has been given and can use this to draw on if difficulties arise during the placement.

Example 6: Beth

Beth entered the university programme at age 27 with a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, which had first emerged in her late teens. She had declared this to the University, but was concerned that clinical educators should not be told about this, as her experience to date was that her mental health was seen as a barrier in the workplace. Beth understood her condition well, and made mature judgements about how she chose to handle it. She was able to control her condition with medication.

Beth's PLP included specific responsibilities for herself, which were to:

- Inform Departmental Administrator that she had a PLP if she changed course or Faculty
- Inform her Department immediately if she changed address or phone number.
- See an Adviser at Learning Support if there was a change relating to her support needs.
- Request a pre-placement interview if going out on a placement/field trip.
- Discuss the recommendations in this PLP with her tutor

In discussions with her tutor and the academic placement manager, Beth continued to emphasise that she did not wish placements to know of her illness despite there normally being a duty to ensure all individuals involved in a student's education are aware of any disability.

In this case, the academic team respected Beth's wishes. However, in agreement with Beth, it was agreed that placement providers be informed of the impact of her disability, although no label was passed on. Placement providers were advised that her performance and interaction with others could be variable, and that this was part of an underlying condition, which was being appropriately controlled. She progressed through the course with sound performance and successfully graduated with a lower second class degree. She was successful in finding a post and only then felt able to inform her employer about her illness.

Example 8: Nina

Nina is a third year student who had a diagnosis of clinical depression.

"After the pre-placement meeting, it was helpful to have something in writing at the start of the placement so the placement educator was informed before I got there. It eliminated the worry of me having to pick a good time to talk about my problems, which I'd have probably avoided doing, and then they would never have known why some days I'm much better than others.

The pre-placement meeting was really helpful as it provided me with both support and practical ways with which to address my concerns. Before the meeting I was feeling really anxious, but I feel much more positive about my placement now".

- 74 The steps taken in encouraging disclosure may determine whether it is reasonable for others to be informed about a particular student's disability. Confidentiality is a right, unless the safety of self and others is compromised (Data Protection Act and DDA 2005).

The Code of Practice and advice issued by the **Department for Children, Schools & Families** includes:

Ensuring an open and supportive culture in which students feel comfortable in disclosing their disabilities:

- on application
- on enrolment
- when registering for exams
- when arranging work placements and field trips
- when requesting accommodation
- when using the careers service (for the first time)
- when joining the library
- when registering at the beginning of each new year or module
- privacy in which to disclose if they chose to.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/>

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

- 75 The DDA requires reasonable adjustments to be made by institutions in order to alleviate or remove the effects of a substantial disadvantage.
- 76 Furthermore, the Disability Equality Duty provisions of the DDA aim to put disability at the heart of the public sector and to ensure that equality for disabled people informs everything the public sector does.
- 77 There are also specific duties that certain listed authorities have to carry out to support them in achieving the outcomes required by the general duty. The main focus of the specific duties is the production of a Disability Equality Scheme, and relevant organisations are required to produce:
- a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme
 - an action plan – the steps that the authority is going to take to fulfil its general duty to promote disability equality
 - arrangements for gathering information about the performance of a public body on disability equality
 - arrangements for assessing the impact of the activities of the authority on disability equality
 - details of how the authority is going to use the information.
 - arrangements for assessing the impact of the activities of the authority on disability equality
 - details of how the authority is going to use the information.
- 78 In practice this may entail doing things differently if the usual way would substantially disadvantage a disabled person. It might also mean providing additional services or equipment. Reasonable adjustments could include:
- adjusting standard procedures, such as admissions;
 - adapting the curriculum, modifying teaching delivery or providing alternative forms of assessment;
 - adapting facilities, such as those in laboratories, library or IT facilities;
 - providing additional services such as learning materials in alternative formats;
 - training staff to understand their responsibilities under the DDA;
 - altering the physical environment to make it more accessible;
 - pre-placement discussion to facilitate reasonable adjustments in the practice setting
- 79 For example, a reasonable adjustment might mean the Placement Educator giving a disabled student more time to write up clear notes, clear strategies or Trust guidance as to how to do these, but then it is the student's

responsibility to become competent at this, e.g. by seeking help from the Disability Services unit and doing some practice case note writing up / patient reports with their university dyslexia support tutor

- 80 Technology plays a significant role in learning. Supportive IT mechanisms should be included where necessary for disabled students. Financial support can also be provided for various IT equipment and further information on the disabled students allowance can be found at:
<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/>
- 81 It is important to remember that not all reasonable adjustments can be met. This can be due to a number of reasons including lack of resources or logistical reasons. An open and honest discussion needs to take place between the disabled student and the HEI, in order to determine what can be done in order for the disabled student to meet the course competencies, whilst not lowering the academic standard of the course.

How to determine what is reasonable:

- 82 What is deemed reasonable depends on the individual circumstances of the disabled student, including how important the adjustment is, how practical it is and the financial or other resources of the institution, so long as the student is able to meet the learning outcomes.
- 83 Reasonable adjustment is designed to enable a disabled student to succeed to the best of their ability within the constraints of academic and professional requirements.
- 84 However, granting reasonable adjustments does not automatically ensure the disabled student will meet all learning outcomes. The disabled student will need to meet all professional competencies in order to pass the course successfully.
- 85 The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, normally makes it illegal to reject an applicant on the grounds of disability. Under current legislation, however, there are only three instances in which a university can reject a disabled applicant if they have the entry criteria necessary, these are:
- Overriding health and safety concerns;
 - Barriers resulting from professional requirements;
 - Necessary reasonable adjustments cannot be made

Example 9: Ben

Ben applied for a SLT course and described himself as '50% deaf'. The admissions tutor invited Ben for an informal interview, with the opportunity to speak to the University's Disability Services department, and academic staff. The main issue with Ben's disability was whether he could satisfactorily pass the phonetics element of the course. Ben was asked to take a test devised by the phonetics department in order to gauge his phonetics ability. The outcome of the test would not alter his offer of a place on the course, however, would give him

and the academic staff an indication of his particular needs and whether these could be met appropriately, and enable him to meet the competencies/learning outcomes of the course.

After taking the test, hearing aids and assistive technology was offered by the University to Ben. After careful consideration and consultation with the disability, academic and placement educator staff, Ben decided to take up the offer, with regular communication taking place between him, his tutor and the placement educator.

Example 10: Miriam

Miriam was a student with severe visual impairment on the SLT course. Reasonable adjustments such as lecture notes in Braille and the use of an assistant during her placements were put in place. Despite this support, Miriam found it difficult on placement, when dealing with children who were being naughty or disruptive, as she was unable to control their behaviour or complete her sessions successfully. She did not pass this element of the course. Her course tutors had concerns regarding her ability to meet the HPC Standards of Proficiency, in particular:

- **1a.5 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice**
- **1b.4 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, client, users, their relatives and carers**

Miriam wanted to work with adults upon graduating and had asked whether all her placements could be with adults. The course tutors considered this was not a reasonable adjustment as the QAA benchmarks for Speech and language therapy require competence across the range of potential client groups. Providing only adult placements would have meant omitting fundamental aspects of the SLT course, hence not being able to demonstrate competency in this area of the curriculum.

After discussion with the tutors, Miriam decided to leave as it would not have been possible for her to meet all the learning outcomes and to successfully pass the course.

Example 11: Sophie

Sophie was a final year wheel chair user SLT student, whose placement was in an old 19th century hospital. As a final year student, Sophie was expected to assess, formulate and deliver therapy programmes for adult patients on the ward.

Whilst Sophie was able to access the narrow wards, it was impossible for her to get behind the nurses station to access patient notes. Due to the nature of the wards and the amount of equipment at each bedside, it was also impossible for her to get close enough to the patient to conduct oral motor and dysphagia observations/assessments.

A further difficulty was that she could not easily draw the curtain around the patient to ensure confidentiality.

As a result of all these practical difficulties she would attempt to talk to the patient sitting in her wheel chair at the end of their bed. Not all patients could sit up after their surgery and even the most basic things like eye contact became a problem to achieve. Inevitably she had to raise her voice for the patient to hear which compromised confidentiality further.

As a result of these difficulties it was impossible for her to build a rapport with the patients and it lowered her own self esteem quite markedly.

Whilst every effort had been made to make reasonable adjustments for Sophie, her personal tutor, placement educator and Sophie herself, decided this particular placement was not suitable.

Health and safety issues:

- 86 Health and safety legislation must not be used spuriously to avoid making a reasonable adjustment. The DDA does not override health and safety legislation and therefore, institutions are not required to make adjustments that would endanger the health and safety of the disabled person or of other people.
- 87 There is a duty to protect the public as well as the student. If occupational health screening and discussions with the applicant/student reveal that they may be a danger to themselves or others either on the taught element or on practice placements, then they may, exceptionally, be refused admittance to a programme.

FITNESS TO PRACTISE:

- 88 SLTs must be registered with the HPC to be able to practise. All applicants to the Register are required to demonstrate standards of proficiency in assessment and management of communication difficulties. Registrants demonstrate proficiency in these areas in a variety of ways. A registrant or potential registrant who has a disability can demonstrate such proficiency utilising any reasonable adjustments appropriate to that person.
- 89 A registrant who develops a disability that may impact on his or her ability to maintain these standards of proficiency is required to notify HPC of this. Further information can be found in the HPC publication "A disabled person's guide to becoming a health professional".
- 90 Fitness to practice forms a part of the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics and it is the registrant or applicant's responsibility to maintain up to date communication with HPC regarding health or disability.

The following HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics are particularly relevant:

- Standard 4. You must provide (to us and any other relevant regulators) any important information about your conduct and competence
- Standard 12. You must limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health
- Standard 13. You must behave with honesty and integrity and make sure that your behaviour does not damage the public's confidence in your or in your profession

Consideration on an individual basis:

- 91 All applicants to a SLT programme should be considered on an individual basis. HEIs should not make assumptions about students' capability and capacity based on disability. Using conditions as a means of identifying a disability is unhelpful as the magnitude and impact on the individual can not be pre-determined.

Summary

- 92 Prospective students applying to courses are strongly recommended to declare any disabilities so that they can be supported through reasonable adjustments to the curriculum and practice placements
- 93 Students who are diagnosed with disabilities during the course of their studies should be enabled to progress through reasonable adjustments to the curriculum and practice placements.
- 94 The RCLT believes that disabled people can contribute to the profession in a positive way and welcomes individuals from all backgrounds,.
- 95 In supporting disabled students, the focus is on the *impact* of the disability rather than a medical diagnosis or label.

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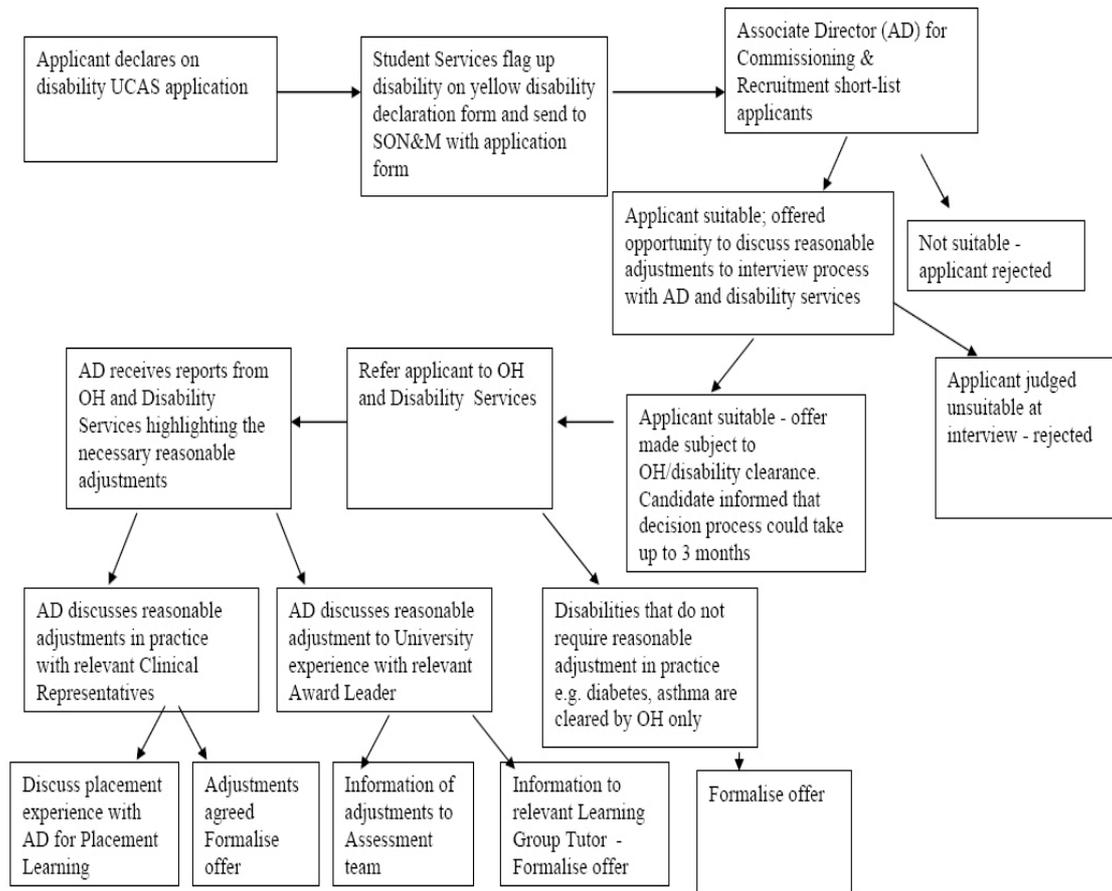
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APPENDIX 1: COUNCIL OF DEANS

Council of Deans: Guidance notes on disability issues in relation to health care education 2007:

Appendix (i) Admissions Process for Students Declaring Disabilities



APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

	<p>Competence Competence is the ongoing ability to meet the standards for professional knowledge, understanding and skills, so that a person can, practice safely and effectively.</p>
	<p>Disclosure The term used within disability literature and the DDA Act to refer to the process by which the disabled person lets others know about his/her impairment</p>
	<p>Disability Discrimination Act 2005 This is a legislation which protects disabled people. www.disability.gov.uk</p>
	<p>Disabled Students' Allowance The disabled Students' Allowance cover any extra costs that you have to pay during your course that are directly associated with your disability, e.g. specialist equipment.</p>
	<p>Fitness to Practise A person's fitness to practise is their ability to practise their profession in a way which meets the HPC and professional body requirements. They must have the skills, knowledge, character and health to do their job safely and effectively.</p>
	<p>Health Professions Council (HPC) They regulate the SLT profession and we were set up to protect the public. To do this, they keep a register of health professionals who meet their standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health. www.hpc-uk.org</p>
	<p>Higher Education Institution (HEI) Usually, a University where undergraduate and postgraduate study takes place.</p>
	<p>Personal Learning Plan (PLP) A personal learning plan forms part of a learning agreement. It identifies the learning outcomes / objectives you wish to achieve, a strategy to meet these objectives, and the means by which you will provide evidence of this achievement.</p>
	<p>Practice Placement/Learning Placement learning is the learning achieved during an agreed and negotiated period of learning that takes place outside the institution at which the full or part-time student is enrolled at. These are an opportunity to gain workplace experience in a SLT setting.</p>
	<p>Registrant: The term 'registrant' refers to a health professional who is on the HPC register.</p>
	<p>Standards of Proficiency These are the professional standards that the HPC set, which SLTs must</p>

	meet before they can be registered with the HPC.
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APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Summary of discussion with disabled student regarding reasonable adjustments for clinical placements

Name of Student: Cath Wright (name changed to maintain confidentiality)

Date of Meeting: 3rd May 2009

Staff: XX (SLT Senior Lecturer - Pastoral support & disability) & YY (Placement Administrator)

Nature of disability (optional)

Dyslexia

Impact

Cath has difficulty with memory, spelling, grammar and organising material. She needs additional time preparing her therapy sessions. She has difficulty collecting her thoughts, so on the spot thinking and answering questions can be very challenging. For example she may recall the content of a session/assessment, but not be able to recall names of clients or tests.

Adjustments/support needed

It would also be helpful if the placement educator understands that there may be some spelling and grammar mistakes in her session plans.

Trust guidance on procedures for case note and report writing would be helpful so she may practice these with her Dyslexia Support Tutor at University.

She would appreciate extra time to:

- Write up notes
- Briefly collect her thoughts after a session with a client, before discussing with the placement educator and/or others.

Funding for adjustments

No funding needed

Who is to be informed of the disability/special requirements (e.g. Trust providing the placement)?

Cath is happy for this information to be passed on to any placement educators and any placement co-ordinators involved with her placements.

Declaration

I Cath Wright confirm that the above information is accurate. I will also advise the placement educators and my HEI if there is anything else which may either assist or be detrimental to my attaining the placement targets.

Student's Signature _____ **Date** _____
(Copies for student, placement co-ordinator and HEI)

I **Cath Wright** confirm that the above information is accurate and that the information summarised above can be passed on by UWIC to any Trust placement co-ordinator and placement educator involved with my placements.

Student's Signature _____ Date _____

Acknowledgement: Speech & Language Therapy Dept, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

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Rubana Hussein
RCSLT Project Coordinator