

[Press release: New report offers guidance to support disabled students](#)

The Department for Education has today (27 January 2017) published a new [report](#) which provides best practice guidance to help universities, colleges and independent higher education providers support their disabled students.

It will help to ensure that all higher education providers are best equipped to support disabled students to reach their full potential and succeed. It encourages providers to look at how they can support and offer the best possible environment for disabled students to pursue their studies.

The report has been produced by the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, which is a new sector-led group, supported by the Department for Education, and chaired by Professor Geoff Layer, Vice Chancellor of the University of Wolverhampton.

The group is comprised of senior representatives from higher education as well as educational sector groups and was created in order to share best practice and reflect on how providers can best cater for disabled students.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said

I welcome this guidance from the Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, and would like to thank members of the group for their work. The guidance will support all higher education providers in expanding their inclusive teaching and learning practice, bringing benefit to them and their students.

This group is an excellent example of how the higher education sector can work together for the benefit of all students, supporting this government's social mobility agenda – giving everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, the chance to study at higher levels of education.

The National Union of Students, who are also members of the group, have produced a [survey format for providers to collect their own student feedback](#). This will enable them to gather information about the challenges their students' face in accessing their higher education course, and inform their approach to reducing barriers within their organisation. It will be issued alongside the report.

Professor Geoff Layer, Vice Chancellor University of Wolverhampton led on the development of this guidance. He said:

Higher education has the power to transform lives, providing skills, experiences and opportunities that leave an indelible

positive impression. However, we know that a student's experience can be adversely affected if they have a disability and do not receive the right support to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group was set up to build on the work and good practice in place across our universities to support our disabled students to succeed. By addressing equality issues and adopting inclusive teaching practices, universities can recognise and value the diversity of the student body and work with them to enhance the learning experience for all.

This report complements the [Teaching Excellence Framework](#) (TEF), which will put a renewed focus on teaching quality and encourage providers ensure that students from all backgrounds, including disabled students are able to get the most of their university experience.

Higher education institutions should also review learning, teaching and assessment approaches to identify and address inclusion and equality issues. There should be a renewed focus on learners and staff with disabilities to ensure that any concerns they have are being listened to and addressed.

1. Read the [inclusive teaching and learning in higher education report](#).
2. [National Union of Students survey format](#) for providers to collect their own student feedback.
3. The membership of the Disabled Student Support Leadership Group:

| Organisation represented | Member |
|--|--|
| Chair | Geoff Layer, University of Wolverhampton |
| Higher Education Funding Council for England | Sarah Howls |
| Higher Education Academy | Pauline Hanesworth |
| Equality Challenge Unit | Chris Brill |
| National Union of Students | James Elliott |
| | John Conway, Royal Agricultural University |
| | Jo Cooke, De Montfort University |
| HE institution representation | Mark O'Hara, Birmingham City University |
| | Sue Rigby, University of Lincoln |
| | Richard Reece, University of Manchester |
| Scottish HE representation | Sheila Williams, University of Edinburgh |

Organisation represented**Member**

Health Education England

Emma Wilton

AMOSSHE

Ben Bailey

Universities UK

Fiona Waye

GuildHE

Kate Wicklow

Association of Colleges

Arti Saraswat

Independent Higher Education

Pete Whittard

Office for Disability Issues

Katherine Toomey (nominee)

Association of Heads of University
Administration

Mark Ellul

Department for Education

Matt Toombs, Georgina Watts, Paul
Higgs (Secretariat)