

## DISABLED STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

### BE DISABILITY CONFIDENT

This information sheet explores steps you can take to increase your confidence in navigating recruitment as you begin to build your career.

### DISABILITY & CAREERS

Fourteen per cent of UK university students have a disability, and this number is rising year on year. There are also 4.4 million people with a disability in the UK workforce. As a result employers, recognising the benefits that a more diverse workforce has on their organisation, are becoming more disability confident. Many are now taking positive action to recruit diverse candidates.

### LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Understanding your rights and responsibilities within the law can ensure you have the correct support when you need it.

#### The Equality Act 2010:

- defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment that is more than minor or trivial, that will impact on normal day to day activities, and that lasts, or is likely to last, more than 12 months'.
- gives you a choice of when and how much information you share with employers.
- allows you to request reasonable adjustments in the recruitment process.

#### Use the Government's Health Adjustment Passport to:

- identify what support and changes (known as reasonable adjustments) you may need when you are going through the recruitment process / are in work.
- apply for support from Access to Work. This could include funding for specialist equipment to support you during selection / when you are in work, or support getting to and from interviews and work.
- help you talk to employers about adjustments and in-work support that you may need.

Disability rights

[gov.uk/rights-disabled-person](http://gov.uk/rights-disabled-person)

Health Adjustment Passport

[gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport](http://gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport)

Access to Work Scheme

[gov.uk/access-to-work](http://gov.uk/access-to-work)

### PREPARE FOR SUCCESS

Take time to plan and prepare in advance so that you are ready to demonstrate your full potential.

#### 1. Recognise your unique strengths and skills

Start by recognising the unique strengths and skills you have acquired through managing your disability, and how these provide meaningful evidence to showcase what you have to offer in the workplace.

[myplusstudentsclub.com/resource/embracing-your-strengths](http://myplusstudentsclub.com/resource/embracing-your-strengths)

#### 2. Prepare a sharing statement

Preparing a 'sharing statement' allows you to clearly and unapologetically state your requirements for support and adjustments, either during recruitment or at work. This can be a simple declaration or be enhanced to demonstrate your unique skill set.

#### 3. Building a simple sharing statement

- State that you have a disability, or – if you're happy to give more details – provide a short explanation.
- Explain the implications.
- Request the adjustments that you need.

*'I have an anxiety disorder. I get very nervous and anxious, particularly in new situations, so it would be useful for me to have an orientation visit, and for people to be aware that I may be more anxious than others'.*

#### 4. Enhancing your sharing statement

Some students feel comfortable sharing more information, or recognise the benefits of doing so, and so might prepare an enhanced sharing statement. This includes the skills, strengths, and experience you have gained as a result of your disability.

*'I have autism, which can affect the way that I communicate and interact with others. For example, I find making eye contact difficult, which means I will require adjustments to the assessment criteria for my interview if it is to be assessed digitally.*

*Autism also means that I have strengths and skills in other areas. These include working in a structured and logical way, having great attention to detail, and an ability to identify patterns and errors quickly. I am also very conscientious and committed to my work and so have good levels of punctuality, honesty, and integrity'.*

## 5. Develop a disability informed approach to your job search

Be aware of the targeted opportunities available to you (e.g., Change 100 internships) and look for employers who are part of the Government backed Disability Confidence Scheme or the Business Disability Forum:

[gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up](https://gov.uk/government/publications/disability-confident-employers-that-have-signed-up)

[businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership/members](https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/membership/members)

Learn to identify disability confident employers.

- Do they explain how disabled candidates can access adjustments?
- Is there a contact who's available to address application concerns?
- Are the website and application forms accessible?
- Do they have a staff disability network?
- Have they won any disability awards?

Note: a lack of publicity does not mean that they won't be an inclusive and supportive employer – always apply for any opportunities that match your skills and interests.

## ACCESS SUPPORT

Organisations that provide information and support, run events and partner with top employers:

- Remploy – [remploy.co.uk/about-us/](https://remploy.co.uk/about-us/)
- Leonard Cheshire – [leonardcheshire.org/get-support/working](https://leonardcheshire.org/get-support/working)
- Evenbreak – [evenbreak.co.uk](https://evenbreak.co.uk)
- Enna – [enna.org/neurodivergent-job-seekers-2/](https://enna.org/neurodivergent-job-seekers-2/)
- Exceptional individuals – [exceptionalindividuals.com/](https://exceptionalindividuals.com/)
- Careers with Disabilities – [careerswithdisabilities.com/](https://careerswithdisabilities.com/)
- Vercida – [resources.vercida.com/jobs-for-disabled-people](https://resources.vercida.com/jobs-for-disabled-people)
- Blind in Business – [blindinbusiness.org.uk/students/graduates-and-undergraduates](https://blindinbusiness.org.uk/students/graduates-and-undergraduates)
- Stamma – [stamma.org/get-support/work](https://stamma.org/get-support/work)

If you have your own business idea, you may be inspired to know that many successful entrepreneurs have a disability – for example, Lord Alan Sugar, Richard Branson, and Jamie Oliver.

Disables Entrepreneurs UK

[disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk](https://disabledentrepreneurs.co.uk)

Disabled Entrepreneurs UK – Stelios UK

[stelios-uk.foundation/disabled-entrepreneurs-uk](https://stelios-uk.foundation/disabled-entrepreneurs-uk)

## FURTHER SUPPORT

For more information, advice and support with disabled student opportunities, email [careersinfo@essex.ac.uk](mailto:careersinfo@essex.ac.uk) or visit [careerhub.essex.ac.uk](https://careerhub.essex.ac.uk) to book an event or 1-1 appointment.