

Guidelines for Supporting Disabled Students on Work Placement

Background

There used to be a loophole in disability legislation where the responsibility for reasonable adjustments in work placements was not clear; it was considered good practice for both the students' College and the company where they were working to make reasonable adjustments but it was not defined as to which would be in breach of the legislation if the reasonable adjustments were not made for the student on work placement.

However, as of 1st October 2004, the employment provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act have been amended. The Act now includes people who are on a work placement as part of a vocational training programme, which can include most students who are doing a placement as part of a further or higher education course.

Work placement providers are therefore now required to ensure they do not have discriminatory practices and make reasonable adjustments for disabled people on work placements. The length of a placement may be a factor when determining whether an adjustment is reasonable or not.

Even though Royal Holloway cannot be held responsible if one of our students is treated less favourably or is not offered reasonable adjustments during their work placement, we still need to address the issues and support the students.

Suggested Strategies (in consultation with the ESO)

- Investigate a suitable place for the work placement well in advance
- Liaise closely with the work placement company and attain exactly what will be expected from the student during their time with them
- Discuss (and suggest) reasonable adjustments with the company
- Discuss the expectations with the disabled student and determine where, if at all, there will be any difficulties
- Encourage the student and company to liaise directly, starting a rapport at an early stage
- Monitor the student's experience regularly during the placement
- Fully evaluate the student's experience after the placement to discern whether the company is suitable to send other disabled students there in the future