

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS



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General Principles

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY - OT PRACTICE EDUCATION

We all have an ethical, professional and legal obligation to support students and colleagues with disabilities. We work with students with disabilities and additional learning needs to try and ensure that the impact on their studies is minimised. These are known as 'reasonable adjustments'. Students need to have these formally recognised by the University through 'Student Connect' or Occupational Health. We encourage students to start this process as early as possible. However, sometimes needs only become apparent with time or their health and circumstances change.

The right to have reasonable adjustments is embedded in a range of legal protections including the Equalities Act (2010). These are the same laws that support all of us in employment and have consequences if discrimination is apparent. Common examples of adjustments include, having a placement close to Cardiff / home address or some flexibility with working patterns to help manage health conditions. We also take caring responsibilities into account.

The concept of reasonable adjustment is very much in keeping with Occupational Therapy's fundamental philosophy and the approaches are probably familiar to many of us. For example, employing holistic, person centred care or adapting environments. Reasonable adjustments are there to help a student access opportunities on a level footing and without any disadvantage. The students still need to meet the same learning objectives by the level of the placement. A reasonable adjustment is a way of tailoring bespoke support to enable a student to reach this level.

Supporting students with reasonable adjustments and supporting struggling students are not one and the same thing. There are multiple stories of students succeeding whilst managing complex difficulties when the right support is in place.

We need to get this right for our students, staff and teams. However, we know that it can be complex at times and requires a commitment to collaborating and working with all partners to ensure we get it right.



ABOUT

This Quick Reference Guide has been produced to support Occupational Therapy Practice Placement Educators when supporting student placements as part of the BSc, PGDip and MSc Occupational therapy Programmes.

It is designed to supplement our formal training and act as a reference for use in practice.

For further information please contact:

hcareotpracedu@cardiff.ac.uk

or visit

<https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/healthcare-sciences/about-us/practice-education/useful-resources-and-guidance>

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

The OT Practice Education Team are happy to help



Indicators of when the balance is right

- Both students and educators feel supported and sufficiently skilled in managing needs during placement.
- The educator and student can have an open conversation during the placement and discuss relevant needs to enable all parties to plan, prepare and implement appropriate support.
- Students with disabilities and complex needs can enter the profession on a level footing.
- There is open dialogue and negotiation from all parties involved in supporting the placement.
- The educator is involved in the planning process



Indicators of when more support is required (red flags)

- The student is unable to work to the standard required despite the support in place
- The reasonable adjustments cannot be supported in your setting due to health and safety issues or working practices that cannot alter
- Repeated contacts and support from university and lead coordinator without being able to resolve the difficulties.
- If the balance just doesn't feel right or there is disruption to work life balance for educator
- If there are wellbeing concerns for either educator or student
- If the educator is needing a lot of support from their supervisor or manager regarding the placement
- Disruption to clinical capacity of the educator over and above what might normally be expected when supporting a student.

When you notice indicators that more support is required please raise it as soon as possible with your own supervisor, the local Practice Education Lead, the Contact Tutor and / or the Cardiff University OT Practice Education Team. Please make sure that the student is involved. We don't expect you to have all of the answers.

TOP TIPS

Sometimes an issue only becomes apparent when a student starts placement and reasonable adjustments may not have been previously identified.

Discuss and review reasonable adjustments in supervision to review how well they are working. They may need to be refined over time.

It is ok to ask about additional learning needs or reasonable adjustments. However, it is also ok for the student to decline to share details beyond the adjustment required.

Should you have concerns please discuss with the student and get in touch with the university so that advice can be given to the student. Remember the contact tutor and Practice Education Team are available throughout.

Open dialogue is the key to success. Try to discuss with the student as early as possible and get in touch with the contact tutor and / or the OT Practice Education Team as required. This can happen before the placement and it is never too early to get in touch.

Please be patient and adopt a collaborative approach. We know how hard you work in practice to provide support and will try our best to support both you and the student. However, these challenges are complex and can take time to resolve.

